

THE BUSINESS, TECHNOLOGY & ART OF ANIMATION AND VFX

July
2015

ANIMATIONTM

MAGAZINE



w w w . a n i m a t i o n m a g a z i n e . n e t

RICK AND MORTY

NEW SEASON • JULY 26

[adult swim]



THE BUSINESS, TECHNOLOGY & ART OF ANIMATION AND VFX

July
2015

ANIMATIONTM MAGAZINE

minions

Illumination's little yellow helpers prepare to swarm the box office with laughs

Essential Guide to Comic-Con 2015

PLUS

'Ted 2'

CN's 'We Bare Bears'

'Dragons: Race to the Edge' on Netflix

'Rick and Morty' Season Two

'Clangers'

Anime Expo



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YO-KAI WATCHTM



Volume 29, Issue 6, Number 251

July 2015



Cover: Illumination's 'Minions' takes over our cover just in time for their solo feature debut July 10.

Wrap-Around Covers: 'Rick and Morty' returns July 26 for a second season on Adult Swim; 'We Bare Bears' debuts July 26 on Cartoon Network.

Frame-By-Frame

4 News and Notes

Catch up on the animation news we posted online at www.animationmagazine.net since the last issue.

6 July Planner

8 Books We Love

Go behind the scenes on Disney's *Pinocchio*, celebrate the shorts of Frederator Studios, explore the imagination of Yoshitaka Amano or get lost in Scott McCloud's graphic novel *The Sculptor*. By Mercedes Milligan.

Features

10 Leaders of the Pack

The makers of *Minions* had to figure out ways to bring the little yellow helpers into the spotlight without losing their considerable charms. By Karen Idelson.

14 A Head for Animation

Director Seth MacFarlane's animation know-how brought focus to animating the foul-mouthed star of *Ted 2*. By Tom McLean.

TV

16 Time to Expand

Disney XD will bring hit Japanese game and anime franchise *Yo-Kai Watch* to the United States starting later this year.

18 No Holding Back

Adult Swim's hit series *Rick and Morty* returns for a second season full of more insanity, just a little bit of scientific accuracy and maybe, just maybe, a few less burps. By Tom McLean.

20 Into the Great Wide Open

Hiccup, Toothless and pals explore new creative territory for DreamWorks' top franchise in the new Netflix series *Dragons: Race to the Edge*. By Tom McLean.

22 Big Bears Seek Big Splash

Daniel Chong brings his feature expertise to TV for the new Cartoon Network comedy series *We Bare Bears*. By Tom McLean.

24 The Big Clang Theory

Sprout relaunched the British classic *Clangers* for American audiences with the help of iconic actor William Shatner. By Tom McLean.

Comic-Con Special Report

26 The Essential Guide to Comic-Con 2015

A guide to help lucky fans pick and choose the events that will make their visit to the enormous July 8-11 confab a truly heroic experience.

30 Page to Screen: Upcoming Comic-Book Movies

Our annual look ahead at the big-screen blockbusters inspired by top comic franchises set to wow theatergoers in the near future.

34 Cosmic Canvas

Marvel offers a sneak peek at its upcoming Disney XD series that paints a bigger picture for the hit feature film *Guardians of the Galaxy*. By Tom McLean.

Spotlight

35 2015 World Animation and VFX Summit

The premier industry event is gearing up for its fourth edition Nov. 2-4 in Marina del Rey, offering unique partnership opportunities via sponsorships.

36 Toasting the Toon Sisterhood

Disney and WIA were among those vigorously backing up the prestigious Annecy fest's Year of the Woman theme. By Tom McLean.

37 News from Annecy

Read about the award winners and top deals from this year's festival.

Opportunities

38 Fund Your Independent Project Now

Start your search with people who know you and your work — and work your way up from there. By Martin Grebing.

VFX and Tech

40 Working to Scale

The visual-effects crew on Marvel's *Ant-Man* scales the action both down and up for the tiny hero's feature-film debut. By Bill Desowitz.

42 Tech Reviews

Delve into the 2015 Adobe CC versions of *Premiere Pro* and *After Effects*, as well as *Modo 901*. By Todd Sheridan Perry.

Anime

44 Otaku on Tap: Anime Expo 2015

Unleash your inner weeaboo and bask in the Japanophilia on offer at *Anime Expo*, taking place July 2-5 at the Los Angeles Convention Center.

46 Restarting *InuYasha* — One Last Time

The Final Act brings Rumiko Takahashi's epic to a triumphant, fitting finale. By Charles Solomon.

Home Video

47 Discs to Beat the Heat

Chill out with a CG *SpongeBob*, the Ghibli gang, the Last Unicorn or Tom and Jerry on DVD and Blu-ray this month. By Mercedes Milligan.

Q&A

48 Summer's End

Creators Dan Povenmire and Jeff "Swampy" Marsh bid an emotional farewell to their long-running Disney series *Phineas and Ferb*. By Tom McLean.

Comic-Con Time!



I'll let you in on a little secret: I'm a huge comic-book fan. I have loved superheroes and cartoons as far back as I can remember, and I always read comics as a kid. There always seemed to be stacks of them around, especially at the lake cottage, where they helped while away the occasional rainy day. The first comic I seriously collected was Marvel's *Star Wars* series. I had the first issue, bought off a spinner rack, and kept on going.

Like lots of comic-book readers, I drifted away for a while and came back to comics as a reader and collector in the mid-1980s. That's when I really fell in love with almost everything Marvel, DC and whatever any other

publishers were doing. The 1980s were a heady time for comics, and I read everything from *The Dark Knight Returns* to *X-Men* to *Cerebus* to *Watchmen*.

By the time I made it to my first Comic-Con in 1993, I was a true die-hard and I remember hauling home from that show hundreds of dollars' worth of comics like prized possessions. I was working at *Variety* in the early 2000s, telling editors I would be happy to file a story on Comic-Con, since I was going anyway, and hearing them reply, "What's Comic-Con?" That changed quickly, and I soon found my hobby and my professional lives colliding. I began blogging about comics for *Variety* and my writing earned me the privilege of being a judge for the Eisner Awards; I appeared on panels at Comic-Con; I got to meet many of the writers and artists whose work I grew up admiring. And I wrote a book, *Mutant Cinema: The X-Men Trilogy from Comics to Screen*, published by the awesome guys at Sequart and, yes, still available in print and digital!

And I still love Comic-Con, even though it's a much different beast than when I started going. I love that it's grown to include so many fantastic pop-culture elements, from TV and movies to toys, animation and gaming. Everyone can find something they like there. It's a lot bigger and a lot more crowded – you can't see everything you want to see anymore – but it's still a show like no other and I'm excited to be able to spend a few days there once again. No matter what, Comic-Con feels like home.

And a lot of what I'll be talking to people about at Comic-Con is animation! This month's cover story features *The Minions*, now appearing in their own feature film. The little yellow dudes are in fine form and the movie's classic physical comedy is charming and very funny. We get the scoop on how it was made via my talented friend Karen Idelson.

We're also glad to have back *Rick and Morty* for a second season, as well as our pal Ted in his sequel, *Ted 2*. We say an emotional farewell to our pals, *Phineas and Ferb*, and welcome the quirky newcomers *We Bare Bears*, as well as Marvel's tiniest hero, *Ant-Man*, who finally gets his own feature.

Lastly, before I go, I want to remind everyone that the fourth annual World Animation and Visual Effects Summit, set for Nov. 2-4 in Marina del Rey, is already shaping up to be the best event we've put on yet. I can't share yet too much of what we have planned, but I am certain you won't want to miss out. It's never too early to start planning!

Until next issue,

Tom

Tom McLean
Editor
tom@animationmagazine.net

QUOTE OF THE MONTH

'When they announced (the end of *Phineas and Ferb*) ... I tweeted it and immediately there were hundreds of people saying wonderful things about the show. And some of them were things like: This is the show that got me through PTSD; this is the show that got me through chemo with my kid because it was the one thing that would make him smile. There were all these kind of things. And I started crying, like I'm doing right now ...'



– Dan Povenmire, co-creator and executive producer of Disney's *Phineas and Ferb*

ANIMATION MAGAZINE

July 2015

Vol. 29, Issue 6, No. 251
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List Rental

Quantum List Marketing

(480) 860-6036

ANIMATION MAGAZINE

(USPS 015-877/ISSN 1041-617X)

Published monthly except for combined issues of April/May

August/September, by Animation Magazine

24943 Kit Carson Road

Calabasas, CA 91302

Periodicals postage paid at Woodland Hills Post Office CA,
And additional mailing offices.

POSTMASTER:

SEND ADDRESS CHANGES TO MAILING ADDRESS:

ANIMATION MAGAZINE

26500 W. Agoura Rd. Ste. 102-651

Calabasas, CA 91302

TO SUBSCRIBE:

For the U.S., the rate is \$60 for 1 year or \$95 for 2 years.

Rates for Canada and Mexico are US\$75 for 1 year or US\$120 for 2 years delivered by foreign airmail. Foreign rates are US\$90 for 1 year or US\$145 for 2 years delivered by foreign airmail. Please allow six to eight weeks for initial delivery.

Also available in a digital version for \$36 for 1 year or \$60 for 2 years.

Animation Magazine

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News & Notes

FEATURES

Fox Animation Adapting 'Nimona' with Patrick Osborne

Fox Animation has nabbed the rights to Noelle Stevenson's *New York Times* best-selling graphic novel *Nimona*. The adaptation is set to be directed by Patrick Osborne, who won the Best Animated Short Oscar for *Feast*.



Marc Haimes, screenplay writer for LAIKA's upcoming *Kubo and the Two Strings*, is attached to write the movie, currently in development.

Stevenson wrote and illustrated the story as a webcomic while studying at Maryland Institute College of Art, and earned Harvey and Eisner Awards for *Nimona*, as well as *Slate*'s Cartoonist Studio Prize for best webcomic in 2012.

FESTS AND EVENTS

'Cosmos' Wins Grand Prix at 2015 Animafest Zagreb

The 25th World Festival of Animated Film – Animafest Zagreb awarded the 2015 Grand Prix for best short film to *We Can't Live Without Cosmos* by Russia's Konstantin Bronzit.

Special mentions were given to *Man on the Chair* by Dahee Jeong, *Mimma* by Calvin Antoine Blandin, *The Sleepwalker* by Theodore Ushev, *Nuggets* by Andreas Hykade and *The Master* by Riho Unt.

The jury bestowed The Golden Zagreb Award for artistic achievement to *World of Tomorrow* by Don Hertzfeldt and the Zlatko Grgi Award for best first film to *Amélia and Duarte* by Alice Guimarães and Mónica Santos

The feature film Grand Prix went to Alé Abreu's *The Boy and the World*. A special mention was given to Sang-ho Yeon's *The Fake*.

Prizes were also awarded to:

» Grand Prix for Croatian Film – *Life with Herman H. Rott* by Chintis Lundgren

» Special Mention for Croatian Film – *Nikola Tesla's Secret Laboratory* by Bruno Razum

» Dušan Vukoti Award for Best Student Film – *Meanwhile* by Stephen McNally

» Special Mentions for Student Film – *The Whole* by William Reynish; *Afternoon Class* by Seo-ro Oh

» Best Commissioned Film – *Paradise Awaits*

» Best Site-Specific Video – *Microphobia* by Nikki Schuster

» Best Children's Film – *Gift* by Jacoba Freyja

» Special Mention for Children's Film – *Lune* by Patrick Delage & Toma Leroux

» Public Award for Best Short – *Bear Story* by Gabriel Osorio

» Public Award for Best Feature – *Song of the Sea* by Tomm Moore

FEATURES

Raymond Ochoa Heads Voice Cast for Disney-Pixar's 'The Good Dinosaur'

Disney-Pixar has revealed the voice talent roster for *The Good Dinosaur*, out Nov. 25.

TV's Raymond Ochoa will lead the cast as Arlo the Apatosaurus, with Jeffrey Wright as his dad, Steve Zahn as Thunderclap the pterodactyl, A.J. Buckley as Nash the T. rex, Anna Paquin as T. rex Ramsey, Sam Elliott as T. rex Butch, Frances McDormand as Arlo's mother, Marcus Scribner as brother Buck and Jack Bright as unlikely human buddy, Spot.

FESTS AND EVENTS

The Animation Show of Shows Reorganizes as a Nonprofit Group

The popular annual animation industry event The Animation Show of Shows has established itself as a nonprofit organization whose mission is to restore, preserve and promote animated short films.

"Now with our new nonprofit banner, we're excited to not only share new films that reflect trends in narrative and showcase experimental animation styles, but we're also able to restore classic short films so they can be seen by audiences everywhere as well," said Ron Diamond, president of The Animation Show of Shows.

To coincide with the show's new status, it has announced the start of restoration work to be done through Diamond's animation studio, Acme Filmworks. The first film to be restored will be the 1964 film *Hangman*, directed by Les Goldman and Paul Julian.

TV

Cartoon Network Unveils First Look at Re-launched 'Powerpuff Girls' Series

Cartoon Network unveiled at Licensing Expo in Las Vegas the first look at Blossom, Bubbles and Buttercup from the all-new series *The Powerpuff Girls*, slated for a 2016 global launch.

Produced by Cartoon Network Studios, the series will feature the voices of Amanda Leighton as Blossom, Kristen Li as Bubbles, Natalie Palamides as Buttercup and Tom Kenny, reprising his role as the Narrator-Mayor.

The new series will be executive produced by Nick Jennings, who won an Emmy for his work on *Adventure Time*, and Bob Boyle creator of *Wow! Wow! Wubbzy!* will co-executive produce.



INTERNET

Netflix Announces Four Original Animated Series, New Exclusives

Netflix has announced four original animated shows: *Kulipari: An Army of Frogs*, *Edgar Rice Burroughs' Tarzan and Jane*, *Cirque du Soleil – Luna Petunia* and *Puffin Rock*.

Each show will launch all of its episodes at the same time around the world, for all Netflix subscribers to watch.

Netflix also is adding three new first-run exclusive series: *Masha and the Bear*, will premiere this August in the United States; *The Day My Butt Went Psycho* comes to the United States, the United Kingdom and Mexico; and *Elias* is now streaming in the United States, Canada, the United Kingdom, Ireland, Australia and New Zealand.

INTERNET

Google Announces More Animated Projects for Spotlight Stories

Google's Spotlight Stories project has announced the next wave of mobile-based moviemaking projects.



Oscar-winning director of *Feast* Patrick Osborne will develop and produce a Google Spotlight Story currently titled *Pearl*. The film is told in a musical format, and is about the gifts we inherit from our parents, both tangible and intangible.

Also announced:

- » Emmy Award-winning artist Shannon Tindle is directing *On Ice* with Evil Eye Studios in San Francisco.
- » Aardman co-founder and Oscar-nominated director Peter Lord will oversee *Special Delivery*, which is directed by Tim Ruffle.
- » London-based Nexus Productions is working on a project with Chris O'Reilly as creative director.
- » And filmmaker Justin Lin has a live-action film called *Help*.
- »

FEATURES

Director Jason Reitman to Adapt 'Beekle' For DreamWorks Animation

Oscar-nominated director Jason Reitman is stepping from live-action to animation to write and direct *Beekle* as a feature for DreamWorks Animation.

Based on Dan Santat's award-winning children's book, *The Adventures of Beekle: The Unimaginary Friend*, the feature is the first put into development by DreamWorks Animation's recently appointed co-presidents of feature animation, Bonnie Arnold and Mireille Soria.

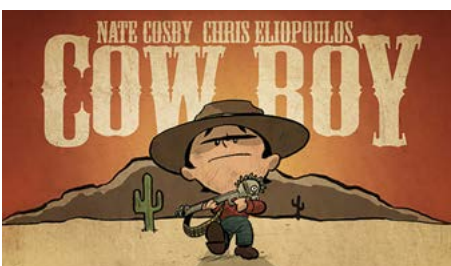
Santat's book is the 2015 winner of the Caldecott Medal, awarded annually to the most distinguished American picture book for children.

IN BRIEF

The animated short film *Waves '98* by Lebanese director Ely Dagher won the Palme D'Or for best short film at the Cannes Film



Festival. The award qualifies *Waves '98* for the 2016 Academy Awards in the best animated short category. ... DreamWorks Animation optioned the Boom! Studios graphic novel *Cow Boy* for development as a television series. Brendan Hay, showrunner on the studio's Netflix series *The Croods*, has been tapped to write and serve as execu-



tive producer on the series. ... Demi Lovato will voice Smurfette, Rainn Wilson will play Gargamel and Mandy Patinkin will voice Papa Smurf in Sony Pictures Animation's upcoming *Get Smurfy*, a fully CG-animated feature film due in theaters March 31, 2017. ... The student senior thesis film *Jinxy Jenkins and Lucky Lou*, by Michael Bidingger and Michelle Kwon from Ringling College of Art and Design, won the Best Computer Animated Short Award in SIGGRAPH's 42nd annual Computer Animation Festival. ... FX has ordered an animated action-comedy pilot from Megan Ganz and *Archer* creator Adam Reed titled *Cassius & Clay*. ... CBeebies has commissioned a third season of BAFTA-winning preschool series *Sarah & Duck* from Karrot Entertainment. The new season of 40 x 7 min. will bring the total number of episodes to 120. ... The CG-animated comedy feature *The Seventh Dwarf* will be released July 31 in theaters in New York and Los Angeles by Shout! Factory Films. ... Studio Ghibli and The Astrid Lindgren Company have appointed London-based Serious Lunch to manage the international rollout of NHK's *Ronja, the Robber's Daugh-*

ter, a 26-part animated serial directed by Goro Miyazaki (*Tales from Earthsea*, *From Up on Poppy Hill*). The three companies will oversee the creation of an English-language version of the 2014-15 Japanese show. ... Disney's next big live-action feature adaptation will be the "Night on Bald Mountain" sequence from the 1940 animated classic *Fantasia*. Matt Sazama and Burk Sharpless are scripting and exec producing the project. ... An animated TV series based on the hit Disney feature *Tangled* has begun production for a 2017 premiere on Disney Channels worldwide with actors Mandy Moore and Zachary Levi returning as Rapunzel and Eugene (a.k.a. Flynn Rider). ... Former Pixar Animation Studios publicity lead Robin Chandler will join DreamWorks Animation as the studio's head of theatrical publicity. ... Dentsu Entertainment USA has partnered with Man of Action Entertainment to develop a 26-episode animated series based on Capcom's video-game franchise *Mega Man* for the global market. ... The Broadcast TV Journalists Association named FX's *Archer* the Best Animated Series at the fifth annual Critics' Choice Television Awards. ... HBO has forked over for two seasons of a new animated series from Mark and Jay Duplass titled *Animals*, which is tagged for a 2016 premiere. ... Paramount Pictures has acquired rights to turn create a live-action feature film based on *Beyblade*. ... The National Cartoonists Society honored *Song of the Sea* director Tomm Moore for best feature animation and Patrick McHale of the Cartoon Network miniseries *Over the Garden Wall* for best TV animation at the 69th annual Reuben Awards. ... Corus Entertainment has given the go-ahead for the live-action/CG animated hybrid series *ReBoot: The Guardian Code* from Rainmaker Entertainment's TV division, Mainframe Entertainment. ... Independent comic-book collaborators Dave Cooper and Johnny Ryan have teamed up to create and co-executive produce *Pig Goat Banana Cricket*, a new comedy series for kids debuting July 18 on Nickelodeon. ... Sony Pictures Animation has announced *Open Season: Scared Silly*, the fourth installment of the CG animated feature franchise, slated for a spring 2016 release on home video.

PASSINGS

Christopher Lee, a prolific actor who brought Dracula to life in countless projects and thrilled genre fans with roles in *The Lord of the Rings* and *Star Wars* and many animation voice-over roles, died June 7 in London. He was 93. ☞

July Planner

2-5

Anime Expo takes over the Los Angeles Convention Center with special guests, panels, events and exhibitors to celebrate *anime*, *manga* and all things *Nihon*. [anime-expo.org]



13

Happy birthday to the inimitable **Tom Kenny**!



14

Take home the stunning CG work of Alex Garland's *Ex Machina* on DVD/BD today. Also out: *Adventure Time: The Complete Fifth Season*, *One Piece: Collection 13* and *Teenage Mutant Ninja Turtles: Vol. 7*.



Born on this day were **William Hanna** (1910-2001) and **Dave Fleischer** (1894-1979).



17

Paul Rudd stars in this month's big superhero flick, *Ant-Man*.



9-12



Comic-Con Int'l presents another whirlwind event in San Diego set to define the horizon of film, TV and print that will wow the world. Plus, the booth models are *literally* paid to talk to you! [comic-con.org]

10

Make way for Illumination's *Minions*!



19

Max Fleischer was born on this day in Krakow in 1883.



21

Pick up *Scooby-Doo! & KISS: Rock & Roll Mystery*, *Robot Chicken: Season 7* and *Fullmetal Alchemist: The Movie* on BD today.



28

DreamWorks' *Home* arrives on disc, as does *Naruto Shippuden Uncut Set 23*, *009 Re: Cyborg* and the massive *No Game No Life* limited edition set.



30

Check out adult-targeted toons in the Shorts program at **Melbourne Int'l Film Festival**, through Aug. 16. [miff.com.au]



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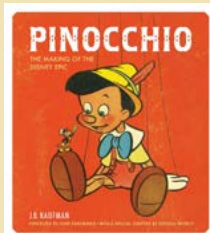
Books We Love

Pinocchio: The Making of the Disney Epic

By J.B. Kaufman

[Walt Disney Family Foundation Press, \$50]

Disney authority Kaufman moves up the studio's chronology from his 2012 *Snow White* tome *The Fairest One of All* with this in-depth look at Walt Disney's second feature – just in time for its 75th anniversary. Adapted from the classic 19th century children's novel by Italy's Carlo Collodi, Disney's *Pinocchio* was the first animated film to win Oscars in competitive categories (two, in fact) and earned a place in the National Film Registry's roster of important works.



Kaufman presents a complete history of the production, from source material to the film's re-release, weaving in behind-the-scenes stories of the inner workings of the studio's Golden Age, the animators' personalities and unbelievable stories (there was almost no Jiminy Cricket, y'know). This rich resource is embellished with over 300 photos, illustrations and concept sketches – many appearing in print for the first time. As John Canemaker says in his foreword, the book is "an exciting adventure into the inner workings of a one-of-a-kind studio and team at its creative peak."

Two Decades of Original Cartoon Shorts from Frederator Studios Selected Postcards 1998-2015

Edited by Fred Seibert and Eric Homan

[Frederator Books, \$39.95]

For nearly a century, short films have been the lifeblood of animation, offering a unique medium for newly rising and established talent to experiment, and an enchanting window for theater audiences to glimpse worlds and ideas they have never dreamed of. Frederator Studios has happily celebrated the artform for over two decades, and for almost as long has been releasing limited-edition postcards honoring their creators.

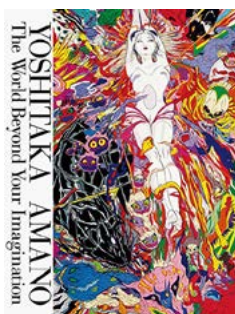
For this colorful collection, Frederator picked 158 of those postcards – representing the likes of Butch Hartman's *The Fairly OddParents*, Natasha Allegri's *Bee & PuppyCat* and Pendleton Ward's *Adventure Time* – to present in this paperback. It's a pleasure to flip through these pages and relive the greats from *What A Cartoon!*, *Oh Yeah! Cartoons*, *The Meth Minute*, *39, Random! Cartoons*, *Too Cool! Cartoons* and *GO! Cartoons* that launched many careers and inspired many more.



Yoshitaka Amano: The World Beyond Your Imagination

[PIE Books, \$49.95]

International design publishing house PIE offers this large-print, bilingual presentation of works by multidisciplinary Japanese artist Yoshitaka Amano, which is sure to alternately soothe your eyeballs and electrify your brain as you progress through its pages. Amano is best known for his massive success as the character designer behind the *Final Fantasy* video-game series, but this title – edited as a catalog for his solo exhibition of the same name – offers a broad look at his creations.



The World Beyond Your Imagination displays over 250 pieces of Amano's art, spanning the beginning of his career through very recent works, including character designs for *Gatchaman*, *Time Bokan*, *Vampire Hunter D* and *Final Fantasy*, among others. The book also includes two rather detailed post-scripts (in English, Japanese and Chinese) giving further insight into Amano's work.

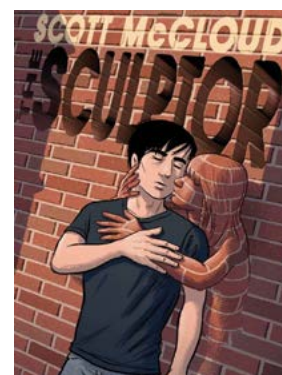
The Sculptor

By Scott McCloud

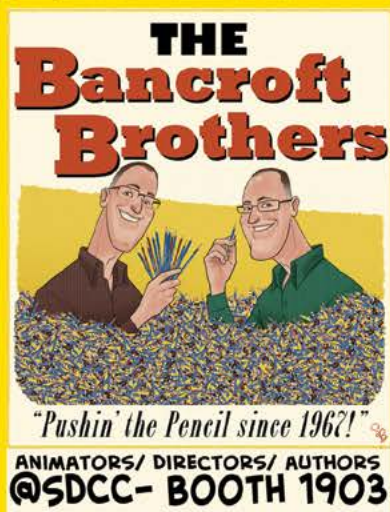
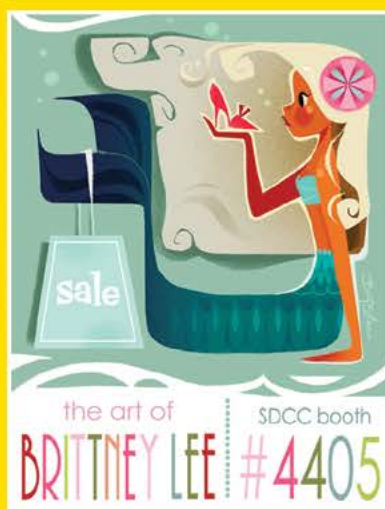
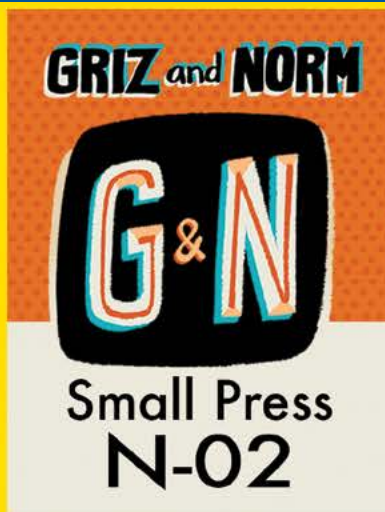
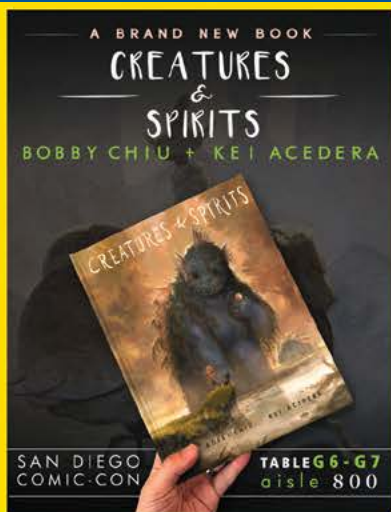
[First Second Books, \$29.99]

McCloud is a well-respected authority on comics, and the thoughtful penman behind the 1993 exploration of the medium *Understanding Comics: The Invisible Art*. His long-awaited original graphic novel clocks in at nearly 500 pages, and combines his careful artistry with a deep understanding of emotional storytelling with an inventive, yet somehow classic, story that delves into issues of love, art and the human condition.

The heartfelt and often humorous story centers on David Smith, a young sculptor who makes a deal with Death to fulfill his childhood wish: to be able to sculpt anything he can imagine with his bare hands. But with only 200 days remaining to be notched on this mortal coil, he finds deciding what to create is harder than he thought, and discovering the love of his life at the 11th hour isn't making his situation any less muddled.



– Mercedes Milligan





Leaders of the Pack

The makers of *Minions* had to figure out ways to bring the little yellow helpers into the spotlight without losing their considerable charms. By Karen Idelson.

The minions of *Despicable Me* and *Despicable Me 2* have spent their entire careers becoming the ultimate, well, minions. They stood as a herd in the background, worshipped their delightfully evil leader with comical abandon, and provided the sort of classic physical comedy you'd expect to see in a Buster Keaton or Charlie Chaplin film.

But that wasn't enough because, in Hollywood, you just can't play a supporting role forever. So helmers Pierre Coffin (*Despicable Me*, *Despicable Me 2*) and Kyle Balda (*Dr. Seuss' The Lorax*) set out to bring these impish little creatures to the forefront in Illumination Entertainment and Universal Pictures' *Minions*.

Anyone who's seen a minion has wondered about them: What are they? Where did they come from? And, seriously, what are they?

And that's where this film comes in as an origin story, showing the minions evolving alongside a host of evil creatures, despots and emperors, as they desperately try to glom onto the one whose twisted ways elicits one of the

few words we can clearly understand a minion saying: Boss.

The opening sequence takes us through an evolutionary backstory that moves from single-celled organisms to prehistoric times and then into modern history. At each step, the minions give their devotion to a leader and then sometimes accidentally destroy him or her. Whether it's a T. rex inadvertently sent into an active volcano or Napoleon on his quest for world domination, we see that an evil leader might not actually benefit from using the beloved yellow devotees.

"Those sequences were a lot of fun," says Balda. "There were a lot of them that didn't make it into the movie because we didn't want to go too far off the main story."

Minions – But Not Minions

Even though these canary-colored beings quickly became audience favorites with moviegoers of all ages, taking them to the front of story wasn't initially as easy as you'd think. Coffin and Balda, along with screenwriter Brian Lynch (*Puss in Boots*, *Hop*) had to decide

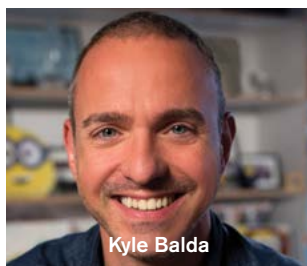
how to turn a creature known for moving as part of a huge, unintelligible group into a singular main character.

"We had to take our three main characters – Kevin, Stuart and Bob – and make them less like minions and more emotional, individual," says Coffin, who voices all three main minions. "Kevin is a leader and he is the one who makes the plan, while Stuart is more of a teenager and Bob is like the toddler and very emotional."

Coffin also felt it was important to have a narrator who could set the story and guide the audience a bit since the three main characters in the story didn't have a language that was easy to understand. Geoffrey Rush's voice gives the audience essential information and "empathy" for the characters, says Coffin.

Balda continues: "We had to differentiate them so that they were distinct individuals and if you put them all together they'd make one character in a way."

As they pulled these three characters forward, there was a host of unusual consequences. Suddenly two of the most endearing minion characteristics – a strange, mumbling



Kyle Balda



Pierre Coffin

The minions look to swim rather than sink as they encounter a number of potential evil bosses to serve in their feature-film debut. Among them are Scarlett Overkill, above right, voiced by Sandra Bullock; and the Nelsons, below, a bank-robbing family led by Madge Nelson, voiced by Allison Janney, and Walter Nelson, voiced by Michael Keaton.



language and uniform Tic Tac style body and facial design – became a liability for the storytellers. The filmmakers had to find a way to clearly communicate deep emotions and distinct reactions to things that happen in the movie.

"Bob was the only one who had a slightly different design at the outset, so we didn't want to break the integrity of that," says Balda. "A big inspiration for us with these characters was Peter Sellers because he often didn't say a lot in his films even though there was a lot

going on physically with him or around him, but you could really see it all in his eyes, the emotion of the scene."

The three main minions set off on a journey once they see their fellow minions thrown into a deep depression when they lack an evildoer to follow. Their quest leads them straight to Scarlett Overkill, who is voiced with diabolical charm by Sandra Bullock. Jon Hamm graces her less aggressive husband, Herb Overkill, with vocal stylings.

But their trip is frustrating and fraught with

all the kinds of obstacles that provoke the most minion-ish behavior possible.

For animation director Pierre Leduc, it came down to preserving the look and feel of the minions while adding something a little different here and there to signal to the audience the personality and emotions of the three main minions.

"Really we had to use body language to show the feeling of the three main characters because you didn't have voices," says Leduc.

"The biggest challenge was to make them understandable to the audience. So Bob moves like he's a child and when he's upset he reacts with a child's body language. This seemed to make each one of them different so the audience would know they're not the same minions."

One scene – a favorite for both Balda and Coffin – in which the minions try to hitchhike to Manhattan, relies heavily and brilliantly on the body language of the three star minions. As Bob becomes despondent over their struggle, he hunches, puffs and slides off a rock in his exasperation. And his body language makes us "feel what he's feeling," says Coffin.

For Leduc, it was also difficult





Minions Bob, Kevin and Stuart begin their journey by leaving their longtime cave home in search of a new villain to serve in the swinging 1960s.

to work with a minion who only had one eye because animators use the eyes to convey so much. This put even more pressure on developing a set of gestures and way of moving for each character so that it would become visual shorthand for the audience and a way to immediately grasp how each character was feeling and what they were trying to communicate.

Going For Laughs - And More

When the minions made their original appearances, they provided comic relief and adorable, if clumsy, little cutaways from the main action of a film. This worked great when the minions were in the background, supporting the main characters and story. But the filmmakers quickly realized the laughs couldn't come at the rate they had during minion moments in the *Despicable Me* series. For the minions to stand on their own and carry a 90-minute film, the laughs would have to come at a different pace.

"At first, we tried some cuts that had big laughs within minutes of each other and that didn't work because it was too much," says Coffin. "When the minions are the main characters, you need more emotions in between those laughs, you need to care about what they want and where they're going with the story."

As the filmmakers tried different passes at the minions' story, it became clear they'd have to use the same kind of timing most main char-



acters enjoyed in a comedy and that the minions who remained in the background would have to become the minions of the three main minions. So, the herd of minions would still have the classic pratfalls and big silly laughs, but now the main characters would earn their laughs as they moved through the story.

"You're more invested, and the laughs mean more, when it comes from a place of empathy for what these three want," says Balda. "Once we found this way into the story then it started to come together."

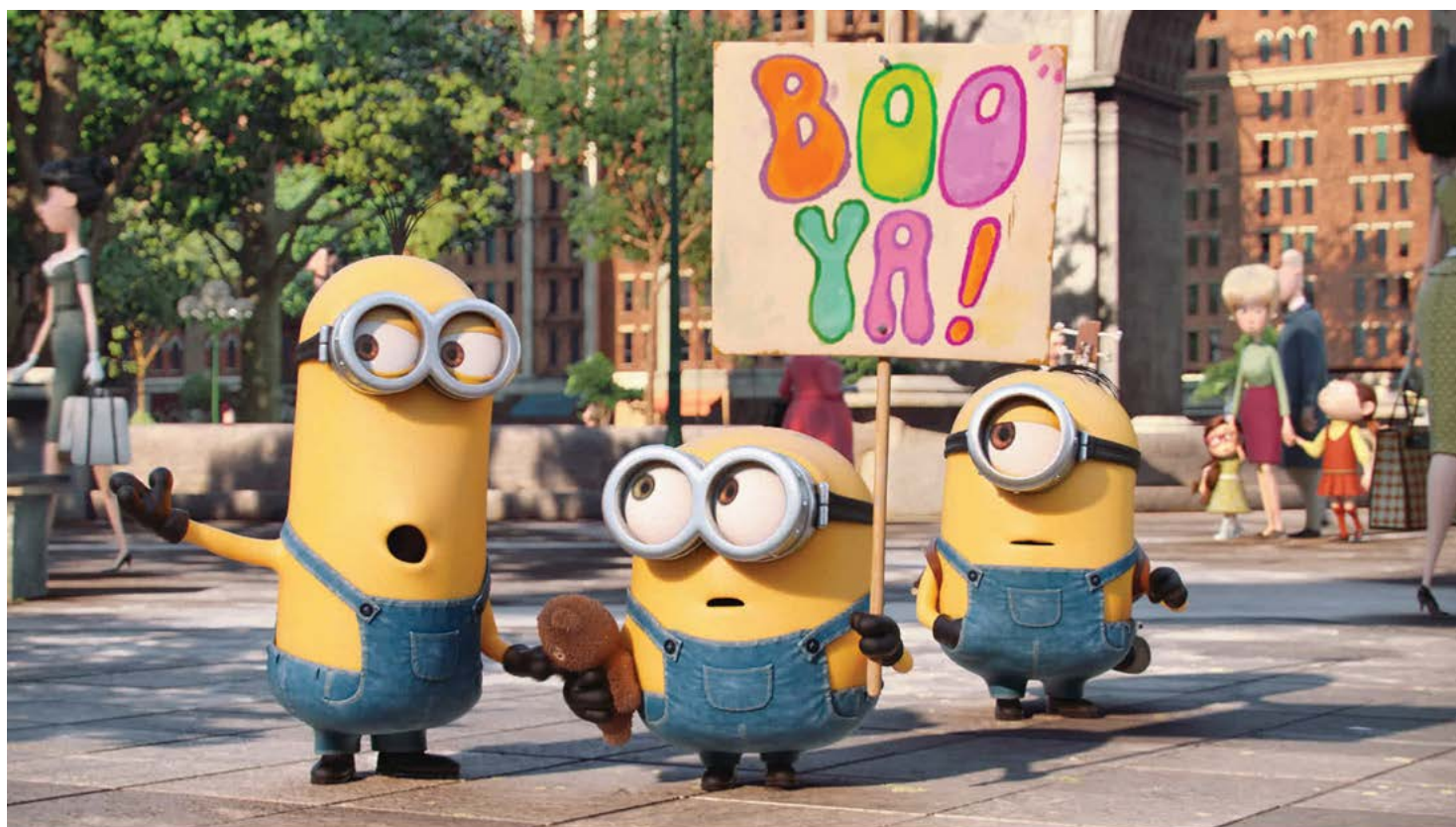
The Swinging '60s

Since the story takes place in the 1960s, both music and the overall look of the film had

to reflect the time. And the visual effects and lighting and compositing teams spent time on specific tools to get the look of the era.

"We worked on imitating camera moves that were used at that time and we also worked on imitating the looks that were made by the camera lenses and film that were used then," says Milo Riccarand, visual-effects supervisor. "The look of the film had to be realistic but not too realistic because it's an animated film about minions."

The crowds of minions were also a challenge. They had to move in the expected adorable, humorous fashion as a large mass and somehow still look like individual minions moving together.



"We wanted everything to look believable but vintage, from that time period," says Nikko Brack, lighting and compositing supervisor. "So we researched films like *Lawrence of Arabia*, *Bullitt* and *Planet of the Apes* for the film, because there were little things each of these movies had that helped us."

One scene in particular, in which our three main minions catch a ride to Villain Con – a hilariously odd gathering of villains held in New York – was inspired by the car chase sequences of the legendary Steve McQueen film. After hitching a ride with what appears to be the ideal American 1960s-era family – The Nelsons – on a road trip, the minions quickly realize they're in the company of bank robbers af-

ter a spontaneous heist leads to a high-speed chase with a legion of police cars in tow.

The Nelsons rely on some high-powered vocal talent: Michael Keaton portrays Walter Nelson and Allison Janney voices Madge Nelson.

The film also borrows some of the best sounds of the era, featuring songs like The Beatles' "Got to Get You Into My Life," Jimi Hendrix's "Purple Haze," The Turtles' "Happy Together," The Who's "My Generation," and (wait for it, wait for it) Donovan's "Mellow Yellow."

As the story takes the minions through '60s era Manhattan and London, we're often guided by the lyrics in the songs or set up for the current or coming scenes. It's another element

of the film that can function on two levels, as the music reflects the era and the words in the songs can become their own humorous in-joke.

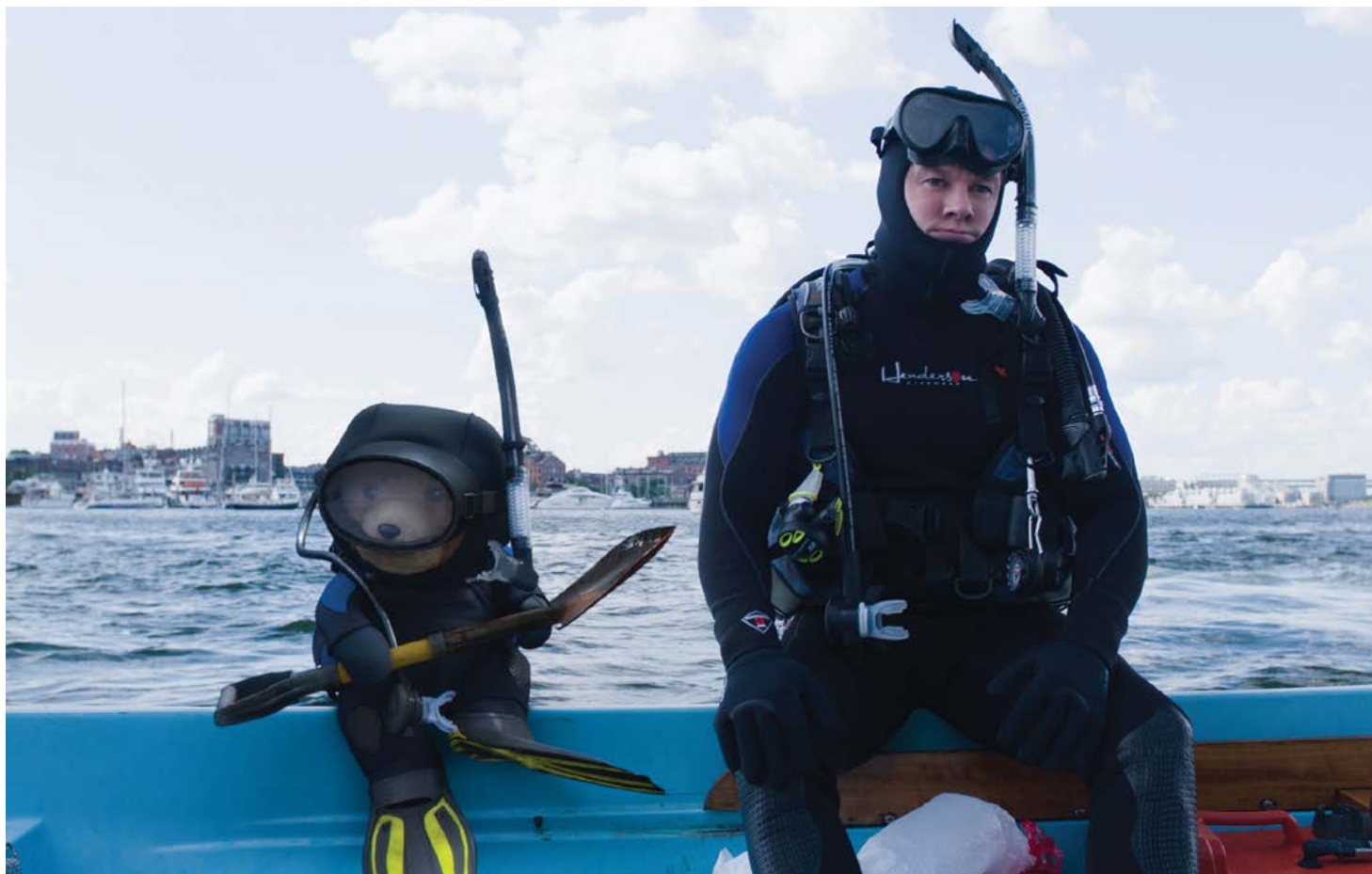
Minions – For Everyone

For Coffin and Balda, it was important to create a film that held its comic appeal for both children and the adults who bring them to the movie. And that could only work with carefully structured scenes that worked on many levels. This could mean physical action, body language or dialogue.

Balda believes the minions have always engaged audiences across age groups because they're evil – but not really that evil – and relatable in their bumbling quests. The co-director is quick to point out that the most awful thing they really do is blow a raspberry at their leader or each other.

Coffin sees it much the same way. He's also a moviegoer who knows what it's like to be the adult taking a little one to see their favorite characters on the big screen.

"As a parent, I know it's not just children who go to see the minions in movies," says Coffin. "So we layered the scenes with maybe one central action in the foreground and then something happening in the background that would be more subtle, more for adults because in a film you're hoping to be sufficiently witty to entertain everyone during the time they give you." ☞



A Head for Animation

Director Seth MacFarlane's animation know-how brought focus to animating the foul-mouthed star of *Ted 2*. By Tom McLean.

Give Seth MacFarlane credit: The ruler of the Fox TV animation empire that includes *Family Guy*, *American Dad!* and *The Cleveland Show* knows animation and used that knowledge to great effect in directing the comedy feature *Ted 2*.

The sequel to the 2012 comedy about a teddy bear that comes to life and grows into adult slackerdom with his lifelong pal, played by Mark Wahlberg, benefited greatly from MacFarlane's animation experience, says production visual-effects supervisor Blair Clark.

"He was always really great to work with from an animation standpoint because he knew what he was talking about; he knew what he was asking for," says Clark, a visual-effects industry veteran and mainstay of Berkeley, Calif.-based Tippett Studio. "And he was very appreciative of the amount of work that goes into it, because he knows it's not as easy as you push a button and it does this. It's a lot of meticulous work."

Ted 2 sees MacFarlane return as co-writer and director, as well as performing the CG-animated title character. Released June 26 by Universal, *Ted 2* picks up right after the first film as Ted marries his girlfriend and wants to start a family – only to find that to do so he needs to fight an uphill legal battle to establish himself as a person in the eyes of the law. Wahlberg returns as Ted's "thunder buddy" John, and the film also features Amanda Seyfried, Morgan Freeman, Jessica Barth and a slew of celebrities playing themselves.

The animation work was done by Tippett Studio, with Fiona Chilton serving as visual-effects producer, Eric Leven as visual-effects supervisor and Brian Mendenhall as animation supervisor; and Melbourne, Australia-based Iloura, with Ineke Majoor as visual-effects producer, Glenn Melenhorst as visual-effects supervisor, Avi Goodman as CG supervisor and Nick Tripodi as animation supervisor.

Blair says the new feature is set shortly af-

ter the first *Ted* and the character needed to look unchanged. But while Ted's looks hadn't changed, the technology that created him had.

"A number of years had passed since the first one and everybody had new software and new tools for rendering," says Clark. "So under the hood there needed to be a new revamping of the digital asset while still making sure it looked just like the audience remembered Ted looking."

The work both Tippett and Iloura were producing also had to match perfectly – a job made easier by the fact that both houses had already worked together on the first *Ted*.

Using Basic Mo-Cap

As on the first film, motion capture was used as a guide for animating Ted. Clark says Xsens Technologies came up with a portable motion-capture rig that recorded the joint rotations instead of using optical markers. That made it portable and simple enough for Mac-



Farlane to get in and out of quickly.

Clark says on any given shot, MacFarlane would do a basic performance just off camera with the mo-cap rig on. “That way, whoever he was in the scene with – usually Mark Wahlberg – they could hear each other and if needed ad lib certain things, and play off each other right there as it was being photographed,” he says.

That process also allowed for MacFarlane’s voice to be recorded on set with the same acoustics as the other actors and avoid needing to add a line recorded in a studio. “He said that always bugged him and it was always a dead giveaway when it sounds like somebody clearly has been recorded in post,” Clark says.

While voices were always recorded on sets, there were some instances where MacFarlane did the motion-capture performance later. That process was used more on the second one

because the crew was confident it would work after it succeeded on the first movie.

A real stuffed version of Ted was used on set and Clark says he would do a “rudimentary puppeteering job” for blocking out the scene for the other actors and the camera crew.

“Then we’d replace that with an eye-line tool, which was just an adjustable little stem with two little eyes on it, so that would give Mark a definite place to look,” says Clark.

It also helped when a group of actors had to interact with Ted and avoided the need for animators to come up with some creative staging. “You get more than one person in there trying to look at the same place, they never do, and then the poor animators have to kind of justify it,” he says.

Details via Key Frame

While the mo-cap gave the animators a starting point for Ted’s basic movements, making him work as a character that can emote and be believable performing alongside real actors required the subtleties of key-frame animation.

“We would videotape Seth as a reference for the animators, but all of the facial stuff and all of the extremities and gestures and hand gestures is all key-framed through both shows,

completely,” says Clark. And in sequences that required more physical action, Ted was created completely with key-frame animation.

When it came to refining and approving shots, MacFarlane’s animation background streamlined the process significantly, Clark says.

“He had this uncanny ability to watch a shot and go, ‘Wait, stop, go back about five frames ... OK, there’s a hint of a smile there.’ And you’d watch and it would be fine and then you’d go to that one frame and you’d be: ‘Yep. Sure enough, there’s a little bit of a hint of a smile.’ And he was just honed in on that.”

Clark says both Tippett and Iloura were extremely collaborative in working on the movie. “There was never an ounce of competitiveness between those companies, on both shows,” he says. “They both were very inclusive and open to sharing ideas and assets as much as you can.”

The final result is that *Ted 2* both seamlessly matches the original movie and does more with the character, Clark says.

“I think we were pretty successful on the first one and we pushed it a bit further on the second one,” he says. “The scenes were written with more detail, with some heavy emotion in them and it was a challenge, but it was fun. I think we succeeded.”



Time to Expand

Disney XD will bring hit Japanese game and anime franchise *Yo-Kai Watch* to the United States starting later this year.

If you have yet to hear about *Yo-Kai Watch*, don't worry – you soon likely will be unable to avoid it.

Disney XD has just struck a deal with Level-5 and Dentsu Entertainment to begin airing 26 half-hour episodes of the Japanese anime series in the United States starting in the fourth quarter of 2015.

The move is one of the first steps to take global the hit franchise about a boy with a special watch that lets him discover and befriend mysterious creatures called Yo-kai to solve everyday problems – problems often caused by other trouble-making Yo-kai.

Launched just 18 months ago as a video game, *Yo-Kai Watch* has become one of the most popular franchises in Japan. So far, the franchise is comprised of six video games, four manga series, the ongoing anime series and two anime features.

The anime series has been the top-rated animated show for ages 4-12 on TV Tokyo; more than 7.5 million units of Nintendo 3DS video games have been distributed; Hasbro is developing products for release next year; and the franchise has sold more than \$1.5 billion in retail merchandise.

And the deal with Disney XD is just the start. Dentsu has granted media, licensing and merchandising rights for Latin America to Mar Vista Entertainment, and is seeking additional markets and multimedia outlets for *Yo-Kai Watch*.

We caught up with Yukari Hayakawa, head of international licensing and marketing for Level-5 to discuss *Yo-Kai Watch*'s impending arrival in the United States.

Animation Magazine: *Are there any changes being made to the series to make it more appealing to an American audience?*

Yukari Hayakawa: Though the main characters, Jibanyan and Whisper, will be kept the same, many of the Yo-kai names will be localized, as their names describe their characteristics in a comical way. Other than that, we have tried not to change too much from the original, as *Yo-Kai Watch* is full of "It could happen!" moments, which we believe can resonate with kids all around the world.

Animag: *What are the plans for licensing and merchandising partners that will support the show as it airs on Disney XD in the United States?*

Hayakawa: Not only are they the leading players of each industry, all of our partners love *Yo-Kai Watch* and they all are strong believers in its big success. The parties will collaborate while approaching kids from various angles to raise and keep the *Yo-Kai* momentum.

Animag: *When will licensed merchandise begin appearing for sale in the United States?*

Hayakawa: Nintendo 3DS video game – the game was another smash hit in Japan – will be in stores in the U.S. this holiday season, as announced at E3. Other merchandising will start appearing in early 2016.

Animag: *Where does the Yo-Kai Watch franchise plan to go next?*

Hayakawa: First, we will put our every effort in making kids and their families in the U.S. convulsed with laughter. We will then roll out *Yo-Kai Watch* in Latin America, Europe, Australia and New Zealand, and the rest of the world. At the same time, we will seek to expand our franchise beyond anime, video games, toys and traditional merchandise – we are sure there are many other creative ways to entertain kids and their families with *Yo-kai*. ☺

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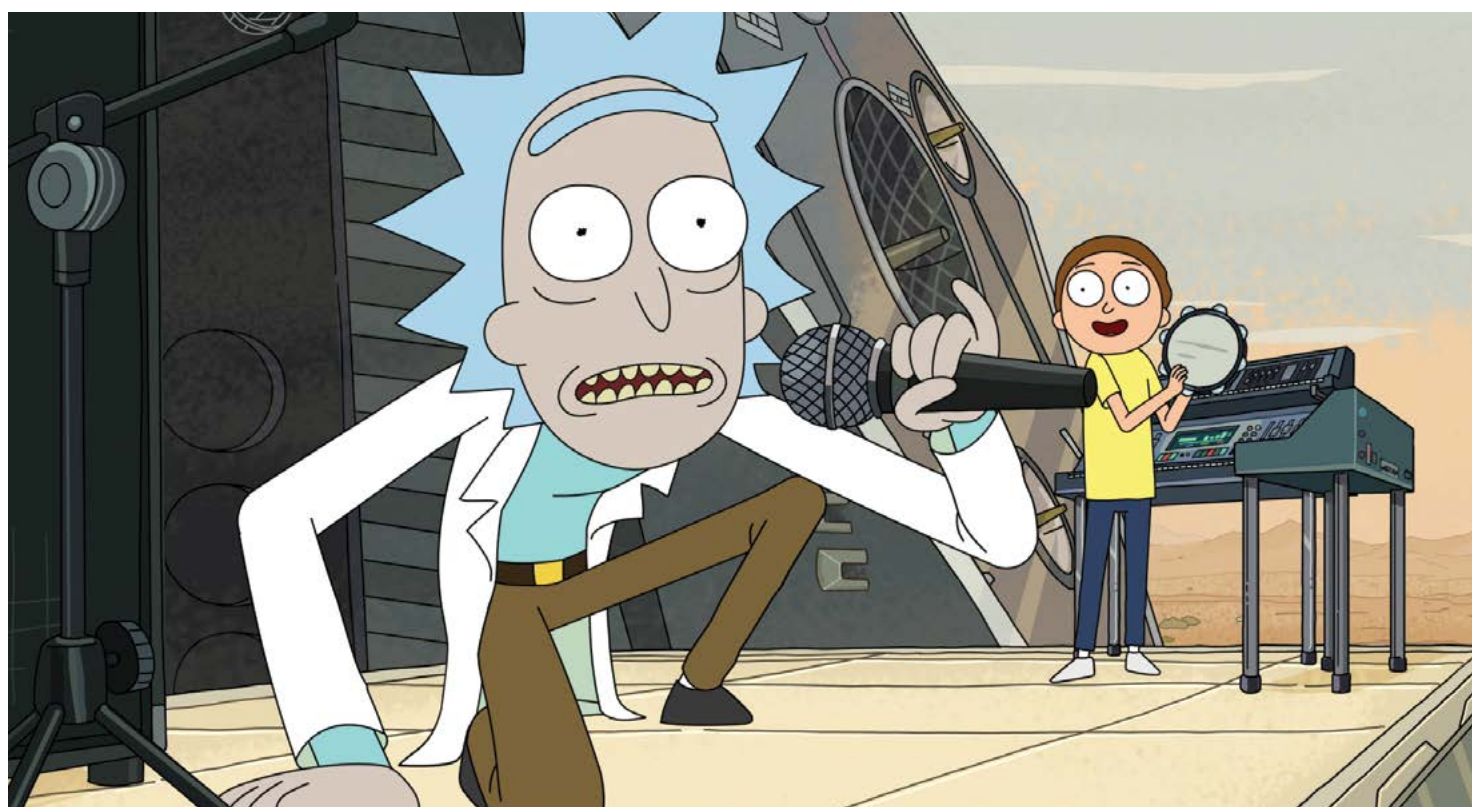


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No Holding Back

Adult Swim's hit series *Rick and Morty* returns for a second season full of more insanity, just a little bit of scientific accuracy and maybe, just maybe, a few less burps. By Tom McLean.

Very little and an awful lot will have changed when *Rick and Morty* returns July 26 for its second season on Adult Swim. Unchanged are the crazed dimension-hopping adventures undertaken by the gruff, angry and constantly belching scientific genius Rick and his perpetually terrified grandson assistant Morty.

But coming back for a second season after a wildly successful first run was far from easy for the show's creators, Justin Roiland and Dan Harmon, who hit more than their fair share of obstacles – including some feather-ruffling off-the-cuff comments relating to the show's animators organizing under The Animation Guild – in getting the second season to air.

The show ramped up expectations for the second series by contributing a two-minute couch gag for *The Simpsons*' 26th season finale on May 17 in which the duo crashes a spaceship into the couch – killing the entire family. Luckily, Rick has a plan: Sending Morty off with a sample of "Simpsons goo" to an alien world so the family can be reconstituted.

Roiland says the project began when he and Harmon invited *The Simpsons* crew to do

a guest commentary for the home-video release of *Rick and Morty* season one.

"So Matt Groening, Al Jean, and a handful of the writers were there and they did a commentary track on the DVD, and during that commentary track they offered us a couch gag," says Roiland. "I immediately asked my line producer Mike Mendel, who worked on the first five seasons of *The Simpsons* as their line producer, to reach out and see if it was a sincere offer, and it was."

The segment originally ran a full 45 seconds longer than the two-minute finished version. "I really cut it down to as fast and as tight as I could," says Roiland. "Ultimately, we sent them the animatic at around two minutes and three seconds and Al was totally fine with it, so we just made sure to keep it around the two-minute mark."

Fighting the Sophomore Slump

Harmon, a television veteran, says every successful show has to deal with the so-called "sophomore slump."

"There's always this kind of unavoidable

– at least in my experience, having done two big experiments in this area – sophomore chaos that comes with (the idea that) now we're writing a show that we've seen on TV," says Harmon, who also created and is executive producer on the cult live-action comedy series *Community*. "Now we have real characters, there's a canon we've established, there's stuff we've done that we want to do again, there's stuff we've done that we don't want to do again."

That makes the second season "roughly twice as hard to write than the first," he says. "But also in my experience, then the third season gets to be OK. We can compare these two experiences and the third season goes back to being effortless because now you're armed with this road of trials you've been down, all this knowledge and you realize what's fun and what's not and stuff."

Harmon says the lesson he tries to teach others, but always has trouble following himself, is to avoid being too ambitious and thinking too much about a desired result instead of going with the flow.

"It's just thinking, 'Oh, we're going to do this

amazing thing,' as opposed to, 'We're going to have fun,'" says Harmon. 'That's something that doesn't happen when you're making the first season of a television show because every episode is a discovery, and then with a second season there's a big temptation there, if you're not careful, to go, 'OK, now that we know everything about the show, we're going to get really interesting about it.' All's well that ends well, but I think the process was harder on my end due to my tendency to accidentally overcomplicate."

There were more late nights in the writers' room for season two, but Roiland says the season eventually did click into place.

Modular Episodes

Like the first season, the second will feature mostly stand-alone episodes with only a light bit of serialization coming in toward the end.

"We'll see if that's good or bad," says Harmon, adding that it's probably better not to ask fans to store unresolved plot points in their brains during the show's hiatus. "It might better for them to go, 'I can't wait for the show to come back,' because it was really funny and amazing."

Little changed in the animation process for the second season, though there were challenges like the season-premiere episode, in which the screen keeps splitting with the timelines to offer dozens of just slightly different variations on a single moment.

"It's almost pointlessly complicated from an animation perspective because they're not even doing interestingly different things, they're just doing different things," says Harmon. "They're just putting down cups of coffee differently in each panel, so I can imagine that somewhere in the world there's 50 or 60 animators what would like our heads on a plate for that one."

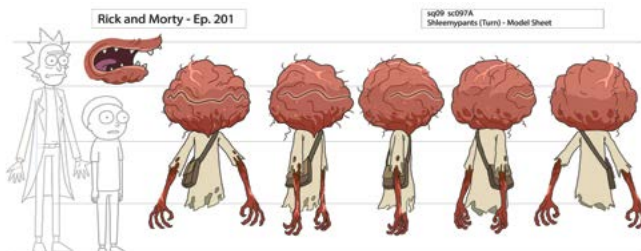
Roiland says one of the shots was so complicated it required 14 hours to render.

"Fourteen hours the computer was completely off rendering and you couldn't use it to do anything; it just had to sit there and render," he says. "It was insane."

The show is animated using Toon Boom Harmony, with elements mostly created in Los Angeles – from character designs to storyboards and animatics – and then executed by Bardel Entertainment in Vancouver.

"They basically build the show with all those pieces," says Roiland. "Then the show comes back to us as Harmony files that we are able to open up and make adjustments for the final push."

So far, the system has worked well. "There's the occasional section of the show that feels a



little puppetry or feels a little digital," Roiland says. "We try our best to fix that stuff and plus it, but for the most part it all works really well and looks good and it affords us the ability to make little adjustments as we lead up to the final lock."

While the main characters' designs are unchanged – save a slight adjustment to the size of Jerry's head – sharp-eyed viewers will notice a lot more detail in the background characters and the environments.

"This season is insane, because we tasked our design team with having to create entire planets of characters, entire species," says Roiland. "I mean it's just insane the amount of builds per episode. It's very, very ambitious from that perspective."

Laying Off the Burps

Roiland also does the voices for both Morty and Rick, who has one of the more distinctive voices in animation – gruff, annoying and constantly belching. The latter has become the character's trademark, though Roiland says he's not really that good at those bits. "I'll go through the script and I'll circle certain lines of dialog and then I'll come back when I'm done with all the regular takes and I'll just grab a real crappy low-calorie beer and some water and I'll do a run of burp takes."

Fans of Rick's burps may notice they're slightly less prevalent in season two, Roiland

says. "That wasn't a decision that was made or anything, it was just me in the record and I got to the burp takes and in some episodes I'm like, I'll do these later," he says. "And then I just would forget to do them or whatever, but that's how that's done."

Not surprisingly, the show's scientific elements have little basis in reality. "It's whatever science we've learned through science fiction, basically," says Harmon. "Everyone in the writers' room is a big fan of the sci-fi and fantasy we've all been raised on, so we really don't research a darn thing – and it shows!"

But that hasn't stopped the show from attracting a more diverse and adult audience than the typical Adult Swim series.

"People in the science field are actually, ironically, really enthralled with our show," says Harmon. "I think some of them became scientists because a part of them fantasizes about being like Rick, being so important that you can just tell people to go to hell."

The show also counts among its fans Nic Pizzolatto, creator of the hit drama series *True Detective*. "He loves the show and he emails me just to encourage me and stuff," says Harmon. "Obviously, he's a legitimate writer, so I keep that Post-It note on my laptop."

That element of Rick – the character who constantly acts like a jerk but is nonetheless right most of the time – is a hard act to pull off on a series, though it seems easier with animation than live action, Harmon says. "It's sort of like the way the Hulk or Thor taps into this part of you that just wants to smash stuff," he says. "Rick taps into that part of you that just wants to be selfish for a day and not apologize for being smarter than everyone in the room." ☞



Into the Great Wide Open

Hiccup, Toothless and pals explore new creative territory for DreamWorks Animation's top franchise in the new Netflix series *Dragons: Race to the Edge*. By Tom McLean.

DreamWorks Animation has hardly sat still with what is arguably its most successful franchise to date, upping the storytelling ante yet again with a new series titled *Dragons: Race to the Edge*, which premiered its first 13 episodes June 26 on Netflix.

This is the third series based on the hit *How to Train Your Dragon* movie franchise, but the first to be part of DreamWorks Animation Television's overall content deal with Netflix. The first two series – *Dragons: Riders of Berk* and *Dragons: Defenders of Berk* – each ran 20 episodes and aired on Cartoon Network.

Much of the same creative team is in place for the new series, most notably showrunners and executive producers Art Brown and Douglas Sloan. The duo says *Race to the Edge* is a very different series, picking up some of the characters from the previous series but finding a new premise in the form of the Dragon Eye: a special codex-like device with lenses that reveal information about new islands and – most importantly – new dragons.

That information leads Hiccup and his dragon-riding pals – Astrid, Fishlegs, Snotlout and the twins Tuffnut and Ruffnut – on a quest to explore the areas around Berk, and it's part of a storyline that will eventually meet up with the start of the feature film *How to Train Your Dragon 2*, which was released in 2014.

Sloan and Brown say the fun in doing a series based on a feature is it offers a chance to explore the characters in much more depth. "We

get to really dive in to all this stuff you don't get to do in a 90-minute movie," says Brown.

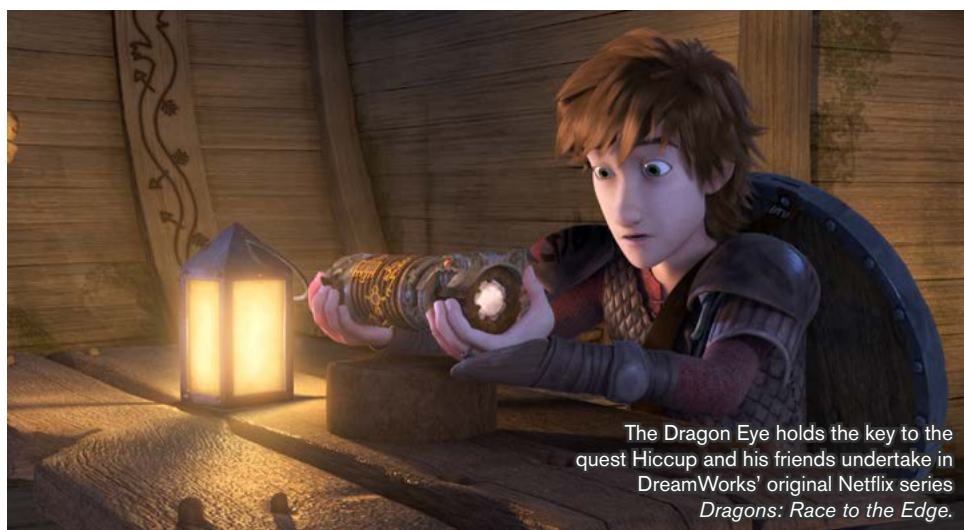
That gives the characters a destination to reach, but leaves the path they take wide open for all kinds of stories.

"Hiccup is still trying to figure out what it is he wants to do, and what that is, is he wants to explore, he wants to push the boundaries," says Brown. "When the second movie picks up, he's already at that place, he's already exploring, he's got this huge map and he's been all over the place. But we are able to tell the genesis of that desire and we also are able to tell you things like how Stoick got his dragon, how Gobber got his dragon and Hiccup's flight suit, we're going to show you how that came to be."

Propulsive Serialization

The show follows an idea from Netflix the showrunners describe as "propulsive serialization." That means the show does have an overall storyline and continuity – but also has the freedom to do stand-alone, self-contained episodes that Brown says are usually about find-





The Dragon Eye holds the key to the quest Hiccup and his friends undertake in DreamWorks' original Netflix series *Dragons: Race to the Edge*.



ing new species of dragons.

"With binge watching, the best shows that do it – I have found – don't dwell on one story for episode after episode," says Sloan. "They wrap stories up quickly and move on to other ones. ... I think that's what we try to do as well, is bring in new villains, bring in new characters, bring in new dragons and switch it up as much as we can."

Inspired by the codex in *The Da Vinci Code*, the Dragon Eye is the key for the series. When a dragon shines his dragon fire through the Eye's lenses, it projects unique data key to the riders' quests.

"It shows them information about new places, new dragons, more information about their own dragons or dragons that they have come across before," says Brown. "There are more lenses that they find and each lens, depending on what dragon shines his fire through it, gives you different information."

The series gets a serious upgrade in the visual department from the previous series and takes advantage of technologies that were simply unavailable to a series production before. Among the new tricks the series learned was

creating better crowds of different types of dragons, improved water interaction, and more robust visual effects and particle-based effects for things like sand and snow.

"Once you figure out how to do it, you can do it over and over and over again and it's not a big deal – it's just figuring out how to do it and teaching the vendors how to do it," says Sloan. "Once they've learned how to do it, you're good to go."

The main animation obstacle for the series remains the time and expense required to animate multiple characters in a single shot, something that's hard to avoid when your main cast consists of five riders and five dragons – one of which has two heads.

"If you have them all in one shot, that gets expensive to animate and to render," says Brown. "We try to keep those shots to a minimum."

Room to Explore

Releasing 13 episodes at a time definitely changes the storytelling approach of the show, Brown says, allowing more serialization and less re-capping or exposition.



Art Brown and Douglas Sloan

"Kids remember everything and they know the shows better than we do," says Brown. "So we would always fight for (the idea that) we don't have to re-explain something in a show."

Elaine Bogan, who directed the two-part premiere episode, says there is a definite difference producing the show for Netflix.

"There was a lot of exploration we were able to do and I feel, because now we're with Netflix, the limitations on the show have expanded a little bit and we're able to play a little more with very broad story arcs that will last throughout an entire season," says Bogan.

Production on the series still follows a tight schedule not too different from a TV series. Work on the series has been continuous, since the next batch of episodes will need to be ready to go when Netflix decides it's time to release them.

Bogan says she handles seven to nine episodes in different stages of production at any given time. Making sure those episodes progress smoothly, and that they are consistent with other directors' episodes, is a constant challenge.

"We're fortunately all very willing to collaborate, and so it might mean one or two meetings a month where we all sit down and talk about what we're up to," she says. "I like showing other directors my works in progress, my animatics, just to keep them up to date on what's happening throughout the series. And I think it's important for a nice consistent feel throughout the season."

The showrunners say the relationship with Netflix has been satisfying and helped make *Dragons: Race to the Edge* as good as it can be.

"You can tell by the quality (of original shows) on Netflix that they really do allow their producers and their writers to achieve their visions," says Sloan. "We definitely have a vision for this show that we wanted to achieve and they let us go for it. They trusted us and I think it came out exactly how we wanted it to come out."

"It's interesting because when they give you that trust, when someone instills trust in you, it makes you more trustworthy," says Brown. "You feel a higher responsibility to make a great program for them. So it works both ways." ☞



Big Bears Seek Big Splash

Daniel Chong brings his feature expertise to TV for the new Cartoon Network comedy series *We Bare Bears*. By Tom McLean.

It's hard enough to find happiness in this modern world as a person, so imagine how much harder it would be if you were a bear – even a bear that can navigate social media. That's the idea behind *We Bare Bears*, a new original animated comedy series debuting July 26 on Cartoon Network.

Created by Daniel Chong, an Annie-winning storyboard artist on animated features including *Bolt*, *The Lorax*, *Despicable Me 2*, *Toy Story of Terror!* and *Inside Out*, the series is producing a first season of 26 11-minute episodes through Cartoon Network Studios in Burbank.

The most-recent show to have been developed through Cartoon Network Studios' global shorts program, *We Bare Bears* features the voices of Eric Edelstein, Bobby Moynihan and Demetri Martin as the bear brothers: Grizzly, whose extreme enthusiasm frequently goes too far; Panda, a social-media addict who cannot be without his phone; and the stoic Ice Bear, who speaks of himself in the third person and acts with samurai-style precision. The three of them get around via "bear

stack," in which they literally stack themselves three tall and walk around the city.

"Nobody really freaks out when they see them ... but they are kind of a nuisance and people aren't super kind to them," says Chong. "They just kind of deal with being outsiders in our world, but they are slightly more accepted than usual."

Modest Beginnings

The series began as a web comic Chong created as a favor for a friend, who posted it on his website. When the comic got a good response, Chong started making more of them and successfully sold Cartoon Network on the show while pitching projects around town.

Bringing some of the best elements of animated features to the show was one of Chong's primary goals in creating and pitching a TV series.

"I had ambitions that the show could have characters that felt very substantial and had a weight to them and that you could just follow them emotionally in a big way," he says. "I definitely work with the writers a lot and try to get

it right. We're trying to make a show that just feels a little different than what you normally see on TV."

Chong says he's adjusting to the speed of TV production. "The pace is just ridiculously fast," he says, adding he spent two years working as a storyboard artist on *Inside Out*, which hit theaters last month, before starting work on *We Bare Bears*. "In TV, you can't second-guess yourself too many times and you just have to be very committed to the direction."

One of the benefits of working in TV and in the quarter-hour format is that good material is almost never wasted.

"In features, you always have so many ideas but you have to discard so many of them because they don't play into the bigger whole of the story," Chong says. "The really gratifying thing about working in TV is that you get to say everything you want to about these characters. You get to tell every little adventure about them, whereas a movie is a little bit more limiting."

As a storyboard artist himself, Chong says he appreciates the story telling abilities they

Grizzly, Panda and Ice Bear demonstrate the "bearstack": their unique method for getting around the city.



bring to the writing process. Like many Cartoon Network Studios comedy series, the show begins with a four- to five-page outline that the storyboard artists then figure out how to execute as an 11-minute animated show.

Chong says incorporating them into the process from the start expands the show's cre-

one gets together and we all work together to come up with the best solution."

Invested in the Work

That also invests the storyboard artists in the work and motivates them to execute the story to the best of their ability. "They have in-

animated features.

"I didn't want anything to have hard edges; I wanted things to feel soft, I wanted it to be natural and I wanted it to feel like there was real media involved, even though it's digital," says Chong, who grew up watching *The Wrong Trousers* and *Peanuts* shorts and reading *Calvin and Hobbes*, *The Far Side* and *Garfield*. "And so our art director (Tony Pulham) found this way to give a watercolor-y feel even though we're working in computer and it's begging to just be very linear and very flat."

Chong visited Annecy to debut the show at the French town's famed animation festival and will follow that up by presenting it directly to fans at Comic-Con — all before the show airs on Cartoon Network.

That kind of public speaking would be a bit of a terrifying prospect for Chong if making the show didn't keep him so busy that he has had little time to think about it. "All I'm thinking about is the next episode that we're doing," he says. "I'm sure it will hit home once people start talking about it or my family members or friends start seeing it but right now I haven't really had time to digest it all yet." ☐

'The really gratifying thing about working in TV is that you get to say everything you want to about these characters. You get to tell every little adventure about them, whereas a movie is a little bit more limiting.'

— Daniel Chong, creator, *We Bare Bears*

ative resources. "We obviously don't have the budget to hire tons of writers ... but we have these story artists who are just amazing minds and creative visual thinkers," he says. "We involve them in our story meetings and whenever we have a writing block or we want some feedback, we call a story meeting and every-

put into what they eventually will be storyboarding and, as a storyboard artist, that was always valuable to me when a director made me a part of that process," Chong says.

The look of *We Bare Bears* is naturalistic and more in line with Chong's comic-strip and Aardman influences than it is with most CG

The Big Clang Theory

Sprout relaunches a British classic for America with the help of iconic actor William Shatner. By Tom McLean.

Clangers are back, and they've got some serious star power in the form of legendary actor William Shatner assisting them in their mission to boldly entertain children on this side of the Atlantic.

The original version aired in the United Kingdom from 1969 to 1974 as a series of very short, often-surreal stop-motion animated vignettes starring hand-knitted creatures that looked like a cross between an elephant and a mouse known as Clangers.

The Clangers inhabited a distant hollow asteroid and spoke only with the sound of a slide whistle. They lived inside craters that had metal lids on them that would "clang" when they were shut – hence the name, Clangers.

Aimed at the youngest of audiences, the series featured inventive animation and was helped along with music and gentle narration by the show's creator, Oliver Postgate. The show had a charm that has stood the test of time, thanks in no small part to the animation by Peter Firmin's Smallfilms; Firmin's wife, Joan, knitted the Clangers characters themselves and dressed them by hand.

The reasons for reviving the series were clear. "If you spoke to anyone in England and said,

'What's a Clanger?' everyone would know what it is," says Andrew Beecham, senior VP of programming for Sprout.

Co-produced by Sprout, Coolabi Group, Smallfilms and CBeebies, the new *Clangers* features narration for the United Kingdom by former *Monty Python* star Michael Palin and for the United States by Shatner. The show began airing on Sprout last month as part of the nightly series *The Good Night Show*; a full launch is planned for September.

Aside from the new faces, little has changed. The Clangers still speak with a slide whistle language and only Shatner can really understand and relay – when needed – to the show's young fans.

Shatner says the show succeeds because it doesn't talk down to its audience.

"I'm the renowned storyteller among the 3- to 5-year-old group in my family, and you hold their attention by not talking down to them but by speaking to them on their level," he says.

"We here have taken the approach of embracing them and telling them a story that has invested in it a meaning, a life lesson – but they won't recognize it until the end," says Shatner, best known for his iconic roles as Captain James T.

Kirk on *Star Trek* and Denny Crane on *Boston Legal*, among many others. "And the people watching it with them – and we hope the teachers and parents will watch the show with them – might offer a sentence or two: 'Look how they co-operate. Look how well they did!'"

The new version preserves much of the charm of the original, complete with a new set of puppets created by Mackinnon and Saunders, who also did the puppets for Wes Anderson's *Fantastic Mr. Fox* feature a few years back.

The animation is traditional stop-motion – or stop-frame, as the British usually refer to it – by Factory Create near Manchester. Beecham says the studio produces about 11 seconds a day of content for the show, which is in a 52 x 11 min. format.

The result should charm fans of the original and make a few new ones – both young and old, Shatner says.

"The show is a marvelous mixture of music and light and shadow and jeopardy," he says. "It's filled with interesting things that kids will love and at the same time feel very friendly towards and be able to sleep at night, dreaming about them. There's nothing unfriendly about these shows." ☾



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The Essential Guide to Comic-Con 2015

A guide to help lucky fans pick and choose the events that will make their visit to the enormous July 8-11 confab a truly heroic experience.

It's time once again for the annual trek to America's Finest City to celebrate your favorite toons, movies and comics with the hordes at Comic-Con International: San Diego.

This year's edition is a bit earlier than usual, kicking off July 8 with Preview Night, followed by four days of con-sanity from July 9-12 at the San Diego Convention Center.

While many people have a love-hate relationship with the show –

love all the cool stuff, hate the crowds and long lines – Comic-Con is always a fun experience full of great moments and additions to any fan's collection.

We encourage you to stop by and say hi to us at *Animation Magazine* at Booth 1535.

As always, this information is current as of press time and can change without notice. Now, read on:

The Panel Guide

Wednesday

Warner Bros. TV Screenings! (6-10 p.m., Ballroom 20). Catch an all-new episode of the hit animated series *Teen Titans Go!* as well as the pilots for *Supergirl*, *Blindspot*, *Containment* and *Lucifer*.

Thursday

Sanjay's Super Team Comes to the Con (11 a.m., Indigo Ballroom) – Director Sanjay Patel and producer Nicole Grindle host the North American premiere of the new Pixar Animation Studios short and offer a peek behind the scenes of the production process.

Looney Tunes Legacy: Linda Jones & Ruth Clampett on The Life and Art of Animation (2:30-3:30 p.m., Room 24ABC). Animators Chuck

Jones and Bob Clampett are two of the most important in cartoon history. Their daughters, Linda Jones and Ruth Clampett have kept their fathers' legacies alive, and will talk about growing up with two geniuses, and how they built empires of their own making geek art cool. Moderated by Leslie Combe-male (ArtInsights Animation and Film Art Gallery).

Crackle's SuperMansion (5-6 p.m., Indigo Ballroom). The television streaming network debuts an exclusive first look at the new stop-motion animated comedy series, *SuperMansion*, from Stoopid Buddy Stoodios.

Cartoon Network Presents: Adventure Time Royal Ball (8-9 p.m., Room 7AB). Last year, Cartoon Network filled a ballroom with the most righteous of warriors and the fairest in all the Land of Ooo, and this year is returning with more fan-favorites, another first-look *Adventure Time* episode, and a world-premiere screening of *We*

Bare Bears! Don't forget to dress up in your most inspired outfit for the royal procession and your chance to win prizes.

Also Worth a Look:

- **Transformers Generations** (11 a.m., Room 25ABC).
- **Gravity Falls** (12:30 p.m., Room 6A)
- **Doctor Who** (2:15 p.m., Hall H)
- **Transformers: Robots in Disguise** (3 p.m., Room 5AB).
- **Moonbeam City** (4-5 p.m., Indigo Ballroom)
- **Scooby-Doo! and KISS: Rock and Roll Mystery** (6-8 p.m., Hall H)

Friday

Atom Ant Animation Spectacular (11 a.m., Room 25ABC). Warner Archive presents a celebration of the 50th anniversary of the original pint-sized powerhouse, Atom Ant, along with a bevy

of animation favorites from throughout the ages, including a look at the upcoming Warner Archive release of the 1984 Lucasfilm animated movie, John Korty's *Twice Upon A Time*.

Disney Animators: The Power of 2D (1:30 p.m., Room 24ABC). A panel of former and current Disney animators spanning from *Lady and the Tramp* to *Moana* talk about the importance of 2D animation in the history of Disney, as well as the part it plays in guiding advancement of its future.

ILM 40th Anniversary (2-3 p.m., Room 7AB). For 40 years, Industrial Light & Magic has set the standard for visual effects, creating some of the most memorable images in the history of modern cinema. Presenters will discuss the company's work from its earliest days and breakthroughs along the way.

Star Wars: The Force Awakens (5:30 p.m., Hall H). Lucasfilm president and producer Kathleen Kennedy, director J.J. Abrams, writer Lawrence Kasdan, and special guests provide a sneak peek at the highly anticipated movie.

Justice League: Gods & Monsters (7-9 p.m., Ballroom 20). Witness the first public screening of this all-new animated film and then stay for a panel led by executive producer Bruce Timm. An encore screening is set for 9 p.m.

Cartoon Network Presents: Clarence & Friends Pajama Party (8-9 p.m., Room 7AB). Clarence throws the best parties and you're invited! Featuring Spencer Rothbell (Head of Story and voice of Clarence), episodes of Cartoon Network shows and prizes.

Also Worth a Look:

- **Regular Show and Ugly Grandpa** (10 a.m., Indigo Ballroom).
- **My Little Pony** (10:30 a.m., Room 6A).
- **Adventure Time and Steven Universe** (11 a.m., Indigo Ballroom).
- **The Walking Dead** (Noon-1 p.m., Hall H).
- **Aqua Teen Hunger Force Forever and Your Pretty Face is Going to Hell** (12:15-1 p.m., Indigo Ballroom).
- **Fear the Walking Dead** (1-2 p.m., Hall H).
- **Teen Titans Go!** (1-2 p.m., Room 6A).
- **Rick and Morty** (1:15-2 p.m., Indigo Ballroom).



- **Star vs. The Forces of Evil and Penn Zero: Part-Time Hero** (2:30-3:30 p.m., Room 5AB)
- **Mike Tyson Mysteries** (2:15-3 p.m., Indigo

Ballroom).

- **Game of Thrones** (2:30 p.m., Hall H).
- **Robot Chicken** (3:15-4 p.m., Indigo Ballroom).
- **Bill Plympton Animation Panel** (4 p.m., Room 23ABC). *The Loneliest Stoplight* will premiere.
- **Bob's Burgers** (4-5 p.m., Indigo Ballroom).
- **Archer** (5-6 p.m., Indigo Ballroom).

Saturday

Marvel Animation Presents (10:30-11:30 a.m., Room 6BCF). Join Marvel for exclusive first looks at *Marvel's Avengers: Ultron Revolution* and *Marvel's Ultimate Spider-Man vs. The Sinister 6*. Also, catch never-before-seen footage from *Marvel's Guardians of the Galaxy* animated series.

Family Guy, American Dad! and Bordertown (1-2:45 p.m., Ballroom 20). Seth MacFarlane will, for the first time, participate in a SDCC panel for the upcoming seasons of *Family Guy*, *American Dad!* and offer a first look at Fox's new comedy *Bordertown*.

Nickelodeon's Variety Show ft. Breadwinners Live! (The Horton Grand Theater). Nickelodeon Animation takes over the Horton Grand Theater to bring you a cartoon-copia of surprises including swag bags packed with exclusive collectibles! Hosted by DJ Boogie. Ticket Required: Get free tickets in the Autograph Area of Comic Con's Sails Pavilion.



Also worth a look

- **The Awesomes** (2-3 p.m., Indigo Ballroom).
- **The Simpsons** (Noon-12:45 p.m., Ballroom 20).
- **Wander Over Yonder** (2:30-3:30 p.m., Room 5AB)
- **SpongeBob SquarePants** (TBD).

Sunday

Sanjay and Craig. Panel featuring a live table read followed by a Q&A with creators and co-executive producers Jim Dirschberger and Jay Howell, and voice actors Chris Hardwick, Maulik Pancholy, Matt Jones and special guests.

Also Worth a Look:

- **TV Guide Magazine's Phineas and Ferb Panel** (10-11 a.m., Room 6BCF)
- **Batman Unlimited: Monster Mayhem** (1-2:30 p.m., Room 6BCF).
- **LEGO DC Comics Super Heroes - Justice League: Attack of the Legion of Doom** (11:15 a.m.-12:45 p.m., Room 6BCF).

Other Events

Adult Swim On The Green (Thursday-Saturday from 9:30 a.m.-10 p.m. and Sunday 9:30 a.m.-5 p.m., located behind the convention center at Convention Way and Fifth Avenue Pier). A brand new experience for fans, Adult Swim activities will include the Carnival Midway, free nightly screenings, *Rick and Morty* spaceship sighting, and the Meatwad Full Dome Experience. All events free with RSVP at www.adultswim-presents.com. Ages 18 and up; valid convention badge required.



Belle's Boutique (Thursday-Sunday, noon-8 p.m., 226 Fifth Ave.) A pop-up shop of fashions from comic strip fashionista Belle and her brother Snoopy will offer exclusive and fun products featuring the popular characters. Each day, the first 250 customers will receive a free EOS Strawberry Sorbet lip balms with their purchase. Free Belle opera glasses will be given to all shop visitors.

Geeks for Peace (Friday, 7 p.m., Moniker Warehouse). Filmmaker Morgan Spurlock brings for the first time to Comic-Con a charitable event raising money for help Kids for Peace support and expand its programs to underserved youth in the United States, Pakistan, Iraq, Liberia and Kenya. The party will be co-hosted by Kevin Smith and Gotham Chopra and will feature special guests including: Giancarlo Esposito (*Breaking Bad*), Frances Fisher, Greg Grunberg (*Heroes*), Scott Grimes (*American Dad!*, *Justified*), Efen Ramirez (*Napoleon Dynamite*), Eddie Matos (*Finding Carter*) and Adrian Pasdar (*Heroes*, *Agents of SHIELD*). The Band From TV will perform and guests will also include an art auction. Tickets available online at www.geeksforpeace.org.

Will Eisner Comic Industry Awards (Friday 8 p.m., Indigo Ballroom). The 27th edition of the awards considered the Oscars of the comics industry is a great celebration of the year's best comic books.

Cool Stuff and Con Exclusives

Adventure Time: The Original Title Cards, Vol. 2 (Titan Entertainment, Booth 5537, \$40).

An exclusive collection of the series' amazing title cards from seasons four and five. Includes a print of the "Wizard Battle" title card signed by Andy Ristaino and Nick Jennings. An edition signed by show creator Pendleton Ward also is available for \$50.



The Ambiguously Gay Duo Car Bobble Head

(Entertainment Earth, booth 2343, \$20). The way Ace and Gary see it, if you're going to build an Ambiguously Gay Duo car, why not do it with some style? Based from the *Saturday Night Live* cartoon, this premium bobble head features Ace and Gary bobbling and driving their infamous roadster shaped like a ... errr, rocket.

Archer Head Pillow

(Factory Entertainment, booth 2647, \$30).

Snuggle up with the world's snarkiest spy.

Bob's Burgers

#1 - SDCC 2015



Edition (Diamond Comic Distributors, Booth 2401, TBD). Stop by Diamond's booth to find out how you can get this variant-cover comic book, which is limited to 3,000 copies.

Cheatin'



Blu-ray (Bill Plympton Studio, Booth 1537, \$25). Bill's Plympton's award-winning animated feature *Cheatin'* is available on Blu-ray for the first time at his booth.

Mike Tyson Mysteries Mike Tyson Astronaut 8-Inch Action Figure with Pigeon

(Entertainment Earth, booth 2343, \$25). This exclusive collectible features the cartoon alter-ego of the world-renowned former heavyweight in a retro style all-fabric spacesuit and includes his trusty Pigeon sidekick.



Minions Keychain Set

(Bored Inc. Hot Properties, Booth 609, \$37). If you've ever wanted a group of Minions helping you unlock the secrets to your house or car, this is the item for you. Includes six Minion keychains and a free sticker.



My Little Pony: Art of Equestria Exclusive Advance Sampler Giveaway

(Hasbro, Booth 3213, free). Friday at Comic-Con is Pony Day, and lucky fans at the Hasbro booth can receive a free giveaway sampler pre-viewing the full book, due in October from Abrams.



On the Floor

If you're on the exhibit-hall floor, here's a list of booths worth stopping at for some great animation or animation-related goodness.

ABC	4245	of Figurative Art	2044
Abrams ComicArts	1216	Lucasfilm	2913
Academy of Art University	4445	Macmillan Children's Publishing Group	1117
ACME Archives	5629	Man of Action	2007
Adobe Systems	4145	Marvel Entertainment	2329
Adult Swim	3721	The Massage Booth	5605
AMC's The Walking Dead	4237	Mattel	3029
AnatomyTools	5120	McFarland	1501
Anchor Bay Ent.	4536	Mega64	1435
Andrews McMeel	1503	MGM / Fox Home	3529
Animation Magazine	1535	Microsoft	100
Archie Comics	1829	Mimoco	5245
Art Instruction Schools	5567	MTV	3729
ASIFA-Hollywood	1534	National Cartoonists Society	1307
BANDAI America	3535	Nickelodeon	4113
BBC America	4129	Nintendo of America	235
Blick Art Materials	5106	Oni Press	1833
Cartoon Art Museum	1930	Panini America	2447
Cartoon Network	3735	Peanuts	1637
Chronicle Books	1506	Penguin Group	1514
ComiXology	2547	Bill Plympton	1537
Copic Marker	5338	Prismacolor	5102
Dark Horse Comics	2615	Random House	1515
DC Entertainment	1915	Rubies Costume Co	3649
Del Rey / Lucas Books		Sanrio	4739
2913B		Shout! Factory	4118
Disney	3635	Sideshow Collectibles	1929
Disney Publishing	1129	Stephen Silver	H-06
DK Publishing	1028	Simon & Schuster	1128
eigoMANGA	2304	Slave Labor Graphics	1815
Entertainment Earth	2343	Society of Illustrators of Los Angeles	2616
Entertainment One	4021	Spike & Mike Festival of Animation	1536
Fantagraphics Books	1718	Square Enix	3829
First Second Books	1323	Stan Lee's Kids Universe	1737
FUNimation	4135	Starz	4029
Funko	5341	Stuart Ng Books	5012
Giant Robot	1729	ThinkGeek	3351
Gnomon School of Visual Effects	1021	tokidoki	5145
Hachette Book Group	1116	Twentieth Century Fox	4229
Harper Collins	1029	TwoMorrow Publishing	1301
Hasbro	3213	Ubisoft	135
Heavy Metal	1529	Uglydoll	3245
Heritage Auctions	900	Uncle Milton / Spin Master	
Holbein Artist Materials	5104	2913W	
Hollywood Sci-Fi Museum	4037	Van Eaton Galleries	4213
IDW Publishing	2743	Vikings on History	437
Image Comics	2729	VIZ Media	2813
Insight Editions	1703	Wacom Technology	5336
J-List	4929	Warner Bros.	4545
Jack Kirby Museum	5520	WeLoveFine	1322
Konami Digital Ent.	3713	WETA Workshop	3613
LEGO Group	2829	World Famous Comics	5560
Lionsgate	4045		
Los Angeles Academy			

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Page to Screen: Upcoming Comic-Book Movies

Our annual look ahead at the big-screen blockbusters inspired by top comic-book franchises set to wow theatergoers in the near future.

2015

Ant-Man

July 17, 2015

Marvel Studios | Disney

Director: Peyton Reed

Writers: Edgar Wright, Joe Cornish, Adam McKay, Paul Rudd



Based on: *Ant-Man* by Stan Lee, Larry Lieber and Jack Kirby (1962)

Starring: Paul Rudd, Evangeline Lilly, Corey Stoll, Michael Douglas

Story: Chronologically following *Age of Ultron*, *Ant-Man* follows thief Scott Lang (Rudd) as he is caught up in safeguarding the mystery of his mentor Dr. Hank Pym's (Douglas) Ant-Man technology. Lang must utilize the size-decreasing yet strength-increasing tech to foil threats and plot a heist that will save Earth.

marvel.com/antman

Attack on Titan

August 1, 2015 [Japan]

Toho Pictures

Director: Shinji Higuchi



Based on: *Attack on Titan* by Hajime Isayama

Starring: Haruma Miura, Hiroki Hasegawa, Kiko Mizuhara, Kanata Hongo

Fantastic Four

August 7, 2015

Marvel Ent. | 20th Century Fox

Director: Josh Trank

Writers: Simon Kinberg, Jeremy Slater, Josh Trank



Based on: *Fantastic Four* by Stan Lee and Jack Kirby (1961)

Starring: Miles Teller, Michael B. Jordan, Kate Mara, Jamie Bell, Toby Kebbell

Story: A true reboot, the latest *FF* feature sees four normal folk teleported to an alternate universe, where their physical forms are altered and endowed with superhuman abilities – incredible stretching, flight, conjuring fire, invisibility and super-strength. Together they must harness their powers to defeat an anti-social computer programmer bent on destruction.

fantasticfourmovie.com

Bakuman

October 3, 2015 [Japan]

Director: Hitoshi One



Based on: *Bakuman* by Tsugumi Ohba, Takeshi Obata

Starring: Takeru Satoh, Ryunosuke Kamiki

2016

Deadpool

February 12, 2016

Marvel Ent. | Fox

Director: Tim Miller

Writers: Rhett Reese, Paul Wernick



Based on: *Deadpool* by Fabian Nicieza and Rob Liefeld (1991)

Starring: Ryan Reynolds, Morena Baccarin, Ed Skrein, Gina Carano, T.J. Miller

Story: Ex Special Forces operative Wade Wilson is put through a shady experiment, leaving him with incredible healing powers in addition to his martial skills. He takes on the persona of Deadpool and rededicates his life to hunting down the man responsible for his fate, kicking ass and cracking twisted jokes along the way.

foxmovies.com/movies/deadpool

Batman v. Superman: Dawn of Justice

March 25, 2016

DC Ent. | Warner Bros.

Director: Zack Snyder

Writers: Chris Terrio, David S. Goyer



Starring: Ben Affleck, Henry Cavill, Amy Adams, Jesse Eisenberg, Laurence Fishburne, Jeremy Irons, Gal Gadot
Story: The *Man of Steel* sequel is somewhat inspired by *The Dark Knight Returns* comic, and pits Gotham vigilante Batman against Metropolis' alien alpha male Superman – until a greater peril puts an end to the confrontation and unites the wary adversaries. Wonder Woman will make her first live-action theatrical feature appearance.
batmanvsupermanddawnofjustice.com

Captain America: Civil War

May 6, 2016

Marvel Studios | Disney

Directors: Anthony Russo, Joe Russo

Writers: Christopher Markus, Stephen McFeely



Based on: *Captain America* by Joe Simon and Jack Kirby (1941)

Starring: Chris Evans, Robert Downey Jr., Scarlett Johansson, Sebastian Stan, Anthony Mackie, Paul Bettany, Jeremy Renner, Don Cheadle, Elizabeth Olsen, Paul Rudd

Story: After the collateral-damage craziness of *Age of Ultron*, bureaucracy rears its obnoxious head, with politicians slapping together a more rigid system for deciding when to call on the Avengers. The shake up shatters the heroic team at the worst time, as a new enemy threatens the world.

X-Men: Apocalypse

May 27, 2016

Marvel Ent. | Fox

Director: Bryan Singer

Writer: Simon Kinberg



Starring: James McAvoy, Michael Fassbender, Jennifer Lawrence, Nicholas Hoult, Oscar Isaac, Rose Byrne, Tye Sheridan, Sophie Turner, Alexandra Shipp, Kodi Smit-McPhee, Evan Peters, Lucas Till, Ben Hardy, Lana Condor, Olivia Munn, Hugh Jackman

Scoop: Principal photography kicked off in Montreal in April. According to interviews with Singer, the film will focus on the origin of the mutants and will feature young Cyclops, Jean Grey and Storm as well as other fan favorite characters. Kinberg has said his script is set in 1983, completing a trilogy begun with *First Class*.

Teenage Mutant Ninja Turtles: Half Shell

June 3, 2016

Nickelodeon Movies | Paramount

Director: Dave Green

Writers: Josh Appelbaum, Andre Nemec



Based on: *Teenage Mutant Ninja Turtles* by Kevin Eastman and Peter Laird (1984)

Starring: Megan Fox, Stephen Amell, Will Arnett, William Fichtner, Brian Tee, Tyler Perry, Brittany Ishibashi; voices by Alan Ritchson, Noel Fisher, Johnny Knoxville, Jeremy Howard, Tony Shalhoub

Scoop: Filming began in New York City and Buffalo, N.Y., back in April. Some casting has shuffled since the first *TMNT* movie, but Fox and Arnett hold down April O'Neil and Vern Fenwick. Early plans revealed the characters of Casey Jones (Amell), Bebop (Gary Anthony Williams) and Rocksteady (Sheamus Farrelly).

Suicide Squad

August 5, 2016

DC Ent. | Warner Bros.

Director/Writer: David Ayer



Based on: Characters by John Ostrander (1987)

Starring: Will Smith, Jared Leto, Margot Robbie, Joel Kinnaman, Jai Courtney, Cara Delevigne, Viola Davis, Adewale Akinnuoye-Agbaje, Karen Fukuhara, Adam Beach, Jay Hernandez

Scoop: Ayers' "Dirty Dozen with supervillains" culls inspiration from various

Suicide Squad comics and appearances. Earlier this year, the writer-director teased that several members of the squad will be holed up in Arkham Asylum.

Gambit

October 7, 2016

Marvel Ent. | Fox

Director: Rupert Wyatt

Writer: Josh Zetumer



Based on: Film treatment by Chris Claremont; Marvel's *X-Men*

Starring: Channing Tatum

Doctor Strange

November 4, 2016

Marvel Studios | Disney

Director: Scott Derrickson

Writers: Thomas Dean Donnelly, Joshua Oppenheimer, Jon Spaihts



Based on: Character by Steve Ditko (1963)

Starring: Benedict Cumberbatch

Scoop: Filming is scheduled to commence at Pinewood-Shepperton in London this November. No official details on what will befall the neurosurgeon-turned-sorcerer in his big screen debut, but Tilda Swinton and *12 Years a Slave*'s Chiwetel Ejiofor are rumored to be playing key roles.

2017 and Beyond

Untitled Wolverine

March 3, 2017

Marvel Ent. | Disney

Director: James Mangold

Writers: David James Kelly, Michael Green

Starring: Hugh Jackman



Ghost in the Shell

March 31, 2017

DreamWorks | Grosvenor Park | Paramount | Touchstone

Director: Rupert Sanders**Writers:** Jamie Moss, William Wheeler**Based on:** *Ghost in the Shell* by Masamune Shirow**Starring:** Scarlett Johansson**Guardians of the Galaxy 2**

May 5, 2017

Marvel Studios | Disney

Director: James Gunn**Writers:** Gunn, Nicole Perlman**Starring:** Chris Pratt, Zoe Saldana, Dave Bautista, Vin Diesel, Bradley Cooper, Michael Rooker, Karen Gillan, Sean Gunn**Fantastic Four Sequel**

June 9, 2017

Marvel Ent. | Fox

**Wonder Woman**

June 23, 2017

DC Ent. | Warner Bros.

Director: Patty Jenkins**Writer:** Jason Fuchs**Starring:** Gal Gadot**Untitled Spider-Man**

July 28, 2017

Marvel Ent. | Sony Pictures

Director: Jon Watts**Starring:** Tom Holland**Thor: Ragnarok**

November 3, 2017

Marvel Studios | Disney

Writers: Craig Kyle, Christopher Yost**Starring:** Chris Hemsworth, Tom Hiddleston**The Justice League: Part One**

November 17, 2017

DC Ent. | Warner Bros.

Director: Zack Snyder**Writer:** Chris Terrio**Starring:** Jason Momoa, Henry Cavill, Ben Affleck, Amy Adams, Gal Gadot, Ray Fisher**The Flash**

March 23, 2018

DC Ent. | Warner Bros.

Writers: Story by Phil Lord, Chris Miller**Starring:** Ezra Miller, Jordan Peele**Avengers: Infinity War - Part I**

May 4, 2018

Marvel Studios | Disney

Directors: Anthony Russo, Joe Russo**Writers:** Christopher Markus, Stephen McFeely**Black Panther**

July 6, 2018

Marvel Studios | Disney

Writer: Mark Bailey**Starring:** Chadwick Boseman**Untitled X-Men**

July 13, 2018

Marvel Ent. | Fox

Aquaman

July 27, 2018

DC Ent. | Warner Bros.

Director: James Wan**Writer:** Kurt Johnstad**Starring:** Jason Momoa

Captain Marvel

November 2, 2018

Marvel Studios | Disney

Writers: Meg LeFauve, Nicole Perlman**Shazam!**

April 5, 2019

DC Ent. | Warner Bros.

Writers: Bill Birch, Geoff Johns, Darren Lemke**Starring:** Dwayne Johnson**Avengers: Infinity War - Part II**

May 3, 2019

Marvel Studios | Disney

Directors: Anthony Russo, Joe Russo**Writers:** Christopher Markus, Stephen McFeely**The Justice League: Part Two**

June 14, 2019

Director: Zack Snyder**Writer:** Chris Terrio**Starring:** Ben Affleck, Henry Cavill, Gal Gadot**Inhumans**

July 12, 2019

Marvel Studios | Disney

**Cyborg**

April 3, 2020

DC Ent. | Warner Bros.

Starring: Ray Fisher**Green Lantern**

June 19, 2020

DC Ent. | Warner Bros.



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Cosmic Canvas

Marvel offers a sneak peek at its upcoming Disney XD series that paints a bigger picture for the hit feature film *Guardians of the Galaxy*. By Tom McLean.

Once known only to die-hard Marvel Comics fans, *Guardians of the Galaxy* exploded into the mainstream with the runaway success of the live-action feature film last summer to become a key part of the Marvel Cinematic Universe.

And now animation is expanding further the franchise, even as it breaks some new ground for Marvel in that – unlike most of its well-known characters – this is the first animated series for the *Guardians*.

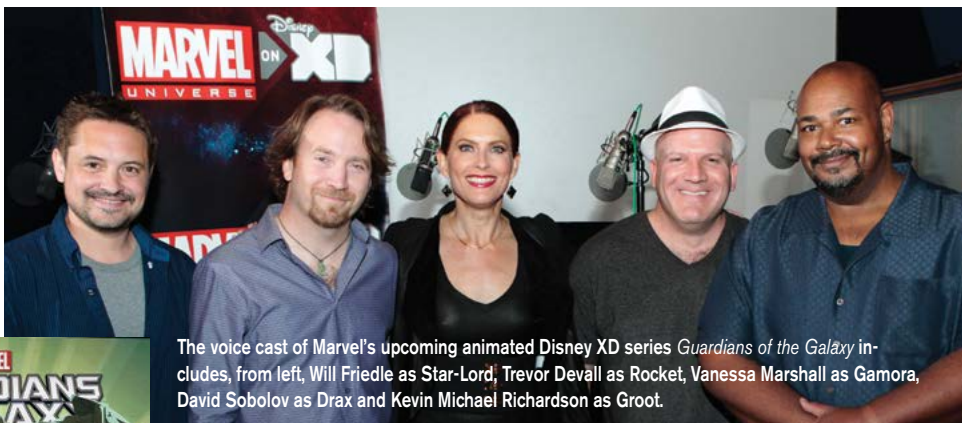
The show is still a ways off – it's set to premiere this fall on Disney XD – but fans already are looking forward to the show. There's a Marvel Animation panel set for Comic-Con that will feature the show, as well as a series of 10 shorts that will lead up to the show's debut. And Marvel is publishing a comic book adapting the shorts using stills from the actual show.

At an early-May voice-record session in Burbank, the voice cast ran lines for an episode titled "Fox on the Run." The cast includes Will Friedle as Star-Lord, Trevor Devall as Rocket, Vanessa Marshall as Gamora, David Sobolov as Drax and James Arnold Taylor as Yondu and Cosmo, who clearly enjoyed playing off each other in the session.

"We're jumping in and making it our own," says Sobolov. "Working off each other helps, too and we've kind of grown as a cast."

The cast also includes Kevin Michael Richardson as Groot.

Work on the series began before the feature came out, says Cort Lane, VP of animation



The voice cast of Marvel's upcoming animated Disney XD series *Guardians of the Galaxy* includes, from left, Will Friedle as Star-Lord, Trevor Devall as Rocket, Vanessa Marshall as Gamora, David Sobolov as Drax and Kevin Michael Richardson as Groot.



development and production for Marvel Television. "Marvel understood pretty early on in the preproduction process on *Guardians* (the movie) that they had something really special," says Lane.

The property made a smooth transition to animation because of its mix of action and humor. "It's one of the least challenging transitions for us in terms of taking a franchise and

turning it into a fun animated show because it's just so weird and funny and the characters are so interesting and relatable that it was great fun," Lane says.

Marvel's senior VP and creative director of animation Eric Radomski is no stranger to adapting comics characters to animation, having co-created the influential *Batman: The Animated Series* and working consistently ever since on top properties in the genre. He says the show has its own look, influenced by the movie version and the "house style" Marvel has been developing since *Ultimate Spider-Man*.

"*Guardians* just lent itself to pushing a little further into the anime of it all," he says. "So there's a little bit of an anime stretch to the style and, because we're dealing off-world, it gave us an opportunity to be a little more fantastic in the color palette, similar to the movie."

That means the show could go epic and operate on a scale that worked for telling stories against a cosmic background and build on the series' characters.

"It's not directly taking Chris Pratt and trying to animate him," says Radomski. "The character of Star-Lord is what we're trying to build on. So within the limitations of animation, we try and have broader expressions and a little bit more attitude in the acting itself."

Being the first-ever *Guardians* series gave the show a lot of freedom from the writing side, says Marty Isenberg, supervising producer, story editor and a writer on the series. "More often than not, we'll come up with a kernel of an idea more from the comedic standpoint – because we know there's going to be action," says Isenberg. "I'm never worried as a writer that there's not going to be enough action in the show. There's always plenty of action, so it's fun to approach it from a more comedic concept."

The series will have some light serialization though the season, Radomski says, though the episodes will all stand on their own as well. The arc involves a quest tied to Peter Quill's origin that the *Guardians* and their enemies are both pursuing at the same time. Fans will have to wait until the fall to learn more.

"I always like to say you want to reward the loyal viewer but you don't want to punish the occasional viewer," he says.



2015 World Animation and VFX Summit

The premier industry event is gearing up for its fourth edition Nov. 2-4 in Marina del Rey, offering unique partnership opportunities via sponsorships.



The World Animation and VFX Summit
Yacht Club Cocktail Party

It may only be summer, but plans are already in motion to ensure the 2015 World Animation and VFX Summit will once again be the premier event for the industry.

Plans already are underway for panels, speakers, awards and special sponsor events for the fourth edition of the annual confab, set for Nov. 2-4 at the California Yacht Club in Marina del Rey, and organized by *Animation Magazine*.

If you've heard the glowing word of mouth that has spread around this very different and special event, you know that the location is intimate and warm, the people attending are some of the best and brightest in the field, and the topics covered will surprise and educate even the most seasoned veterans of our industry.

This year's gathering is specifically geared to introduce new ideas, technologies and

people who are on the cutting edge and its goal is to facilitate a vision for the future for attendees and their companies. Networking opportunities abound, from breakfast through the evening parties.

The event will again bring together the talented filmmakers behind the year's Oscar-contending animated and visual-effects movies. It also will introduce and showcase new distribution channels, explore alternative revenue streams for studio owners; and allow animators and VFX pros, along with software and hardware producers, to showcase their talent and products.

All of this takes place in an environment that encourages a natural flow of information and camaraderie. Attendees will get to mix with a broad range of industry leaders and talent from around the globe.

The summit is seeking companies interested in sponsoring the event. Sponsors have the opportunity to co-host the summit with *Animation Magazine* and welcome the global animation and VFX guests. Sponsors can spotlight their products and services during their chosen summit activity and will receive branding opportunities throughout the year in the print, digital and online versions of *Animation Magazine*, on the summit's website and via our extensive social media reach.

This is a great opportunity to reach an elite group of industry leaders with a customized sponsorship package that we hope you will take advantage of and help us make this year's event better than ever.

For more information, visit
www.animationmagazine.net/summit

The *Simpsons* voice actor Nancy Cartwright and director David Silverman on the red carpet.



Director and producer Damián Perea Lezcano, director Tony Bancroft and *How to Train Your Dragon 2* writer and director Dean DeBlois.



Chris Nee, Alikí Theofilopoulos Grafft, Daron Nefcy and Brooke Keesling represented Disney at this year's Annecy festival.

Toasting the Toon Sisterhood

Disney and Women in Animation were among those vigorously backing up the prestigious Annecy festival's Year of the Woman theme. By Tom McLean.

It was the Year of the Woman Animator at Annecy, with studios, independents and groups all pitching in to celebrate women's growing role in the art form and industry of animation.

Women in Animation organized multiple panels and events, with the group's co-president, Marge Dean, serving as a juror for the features competition. Just prior to Annecy, WIA announced it had reached 1,000 members, up from 125 when Dean and co-president Kristy Scanlan took over the group in 2013.

"It reflects the hard work that our board has put in, but it also reflects the hunger for this kind of group," Dean says. "Everyone knows and recognizes that it's time to uncup this creative force."

Disney was one of several studios that got behind the theme in a big way, sending to the festival a delegation that included: Daron Nefcy, creator and executive producer of *Star vs. The Forces of Evil*; Chris Nee, creator of *Doc McStuffins*; Alikí Theofilopoulos Grafft, director of the "Eau de Minnie" episode of *Disney Mickey Mouse* that also was in the TV competition; and Brooke Keesling, director of animation talent development for Disney Television Animation.

In the days before the festival, *Animation Magazine* sat down with the Disney group for

a talk about the festival and women in animation in general. The first part of this discussion appeared online at <http://tiny.cc/AnnecyWomen>; and continues here.

Animation Magazine: *Do you think interest among women in animation has always been there or are there certain shows that you think have sparked that interest?*

Alikí Theofilopoulos Grafft: In my early days of pitching, whenever I used to hear that girls don't watch cartoons, we can't do girl characters; I'd be like: "What?!? I love cartoons! I've always loved cartoons since I was a kid, and I have friends who love cartoons! What are you talking about?" It just seemed so strange to me. So I feel like it's always been there.

Animag: *Is there still a sense that there's a division in terms of the types of shows women can do? There's always been that division between shows aimed specifically at girls or aimed specifically at boys.*

Chris Nee: Up and down the board, the ratings do show that boys will watch what people thought were girls characters and vice versa, and as that data starts to come in, that crazy metadata, I think it will start to break (that) down.

Brooke Keesling: Plus there's the gender fluidity right now that's coming much more in the spotlight. I was saying earlier that I have over half female students in my class but two

of them are transitioning to male. ... Everyone's sweet and accepting of diversity within gender, so that conversation will change again.

Theofilopoulos Grafft: I feel like it's our generation that has really needed some changing in our points of view in this collective art. But Daron's generation and your students are the ones that are going to come in and be like, "What? Who cares?"

Nee: I think we're in the unconscious bias era and that's different than the overt bias era. ... I was in a writer's room where I was with a group of guys, and this was years ago ... and it was a group of guys and it was a very blue room, and I was always the one who – in theory – stepped over the line. And I remember just being like: "No, your line was so far out there, but it's just because I said it that you have a reaction." That's unconscious bias and, believe me, that stuff is just sort of there, and that's sort of the next step.

Daron Nefcy: And then I think you saw this for a while, where all the female characters were perfect. It's like we have a female character but now she's good at math and super smart and super nice and super this and super that. It's pretty bland. And that's kind of the other extreme. ... I do like how much female characters are allowed to have flaws now and that's huge. That what makes a truly well-rounded character. ☺

News & Notes @ Annecy

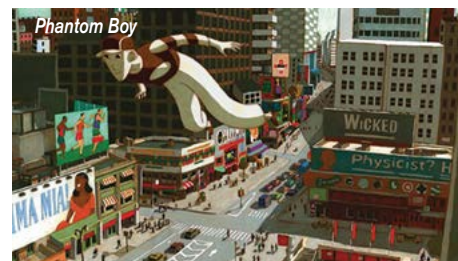
GKIDS Picks Up Three Top Features

New York-based distributor GKIDS made the biggest splash at Annecy this year, picking up the U.S. rights to *April and the Extraordinary World* and North American rights to *Extraordinary Tales* and *Phantom Boy*.

Directed by Christian Desmares and Frank Ekinci, Studio Canal's *April and the Extraordinary World* is based on a graphic novel by Jacques Tardi about a girl in an alternate steampunk timeline who searches for her parents – scientists who have discovered a serum for longevity. GKIDS is planning an early 2016 release in both English and French. The movie is a France-Canada-Belgium co-production between JSBC, Studiocanal, Kaibou Production UMT, Need Productions, Arte France Cinema, Jouror Distribution, Belgian pubcaster RTBF, Proximus and Tchack.

Extraordinary Tales from Melusine Productions is an anthology movie based on five stories by Edgar Allan Poe. Directed by Raul Garcia and featuring the voices of Christopher Lee, Bela Lugosi, Julian Sands, Roger Corman and Guillermo Del Toro, *Extraordinary Tales* will receive a day-and-date release Oct. 30 in theaters and VOD.

Phantom Boy is a new animated feature from the Oscar-nominated writers and directors of *A Cat in Paris*: Jean-Loup Felicioli and Alain Gagnol. GKIDS is planning a spring 2016 theatrical release in the United States and Canada. *Phantom Boy* is written and directed by Felicioli and Gagnol and produced by Jacques-Remy Girard and Annemie Degryse. It is a co-production between Folimage, Lunanime, France 3 Cinema and Rhone-Alpes Cinema.



In Brief

Attendance at the 30th annual edition of MIFA was up 10 percent over 2013's numbers with 2,680 accreditations, according to festival organizer CITIA. It also reported 555 companies and 364 buyers attended. ... Spain's BRB Internacional announced production on the feature film version of the hit series *Dogtanian and the Three Muskehounds*. BRB will produce with Screen21 with China's Mili Pictures as co-producer for an expected completion by the end of next year. Jose Javier Martinez will direct and the film has a reported \$8 million budget. The film is based on the original cartoon series, produced in 1981 with a second series following in 1990. ... Spain-based Ilion Animation Studios was announced as producing a major animated feature for Paramount Animation. Ilion got the gig after bidding against other studios. It's now

employing some 350 artists on the movie. ... Cartoon Network has launched a new talent-development website titled Cartoon Network Imagination Studios. Launching in EMEA nations, the site will feature Cartoon Network creators teaching the basics of animation. Children ages 6-12 will have a chance to submit their creations with winners seeing their ideas brought to life on air on the network. The project will launch in the United Kingdom in early July, with awards open for entries starting Sept 1. ... A new feature version of *Ghost in the Shell* has concluded distribution deals with Anime Ltd. in France, Dynit Srl in Italy and Selecta Vision in Spain and Portugal. The new film is produced by I.G. and distributed in Japan by Toho. International sales are handled by Kodansha, which is the publisher of the original manga and the rights holder. ... Luxembourg-based Melusine Production has signed on to Cartoon Saloon's next project, *The*

Breadwinner, directed by Nora Twomey. Melusine will do much of the animation and backgrounds on the feature. ... Paul Leluc will direct *French Riviera* for Les Armateurs. Leluc had previously directed the animated TV series *The Long Long Holiday*, which tells stories of World War II from the perspective of children. ... *The Boy and the World* has closed distribution deals with Champ List for China, HBO for Latin America and Film Verleih Gruppe for Germany, Austria and German-speaking Switzerland. The feature won the Cristal Award at last year's festival. ... Paramount Pictures acquired worldwide distribution to the Spanish film *Capture the Flag* and will release it Aug. 28. The film is produced by Telecinco Cinema and Telefonica Studios, in conjunction with the film's writer and producer Jordi Gasull and producer Edmond Roch at 4 Cats Pictures. Animation is by Lightbox Animation Studios. ☞

Cristal Awards

- ◆ **Feature Film:** *April and the Extraordinary World* – Franck Ekinci, Christian Desmares; France, Canada, Belgium
- ◆ **Short Film:** *We Can't Live Without Cosmos* – Konstantin Bronzit, Russia
- ◆ **TV Production:** *Hello World!*, "Long-Eared Owl" – Éric Serre, France
- ◆ **Commissioned Film:** *Rotary*, "Fateline" – Suresh Eriyat, India
- ◆ **Graduation Film:** *My Dad* – Marcus Armitage, United Kingdom
- ◆ **Feature Films**
- ◆ **Jury Award:** *Sarusuberi: Miss Hokusai* – Keiichi Hara, Japan
- ◆ **Audience Award:** *Long Way*

- North* – Rémi Chayé, Denmark, France
- ◆ **Short Films**
- ◆ **Jury Award:** *The Master* – Riho Unt, Estonia
- ◆ **Jean-Luc Xiberras Award for a First Film:** *Guida* – Rosana Urbes, Brazil
- ◆ **Jury Distinction and Audience Award:** *World of Tomorrow* – Don Hertzfeldt, United States
- ◆ **Animation Off-Limits**
- ◆ **Off-Limits Award:** *Mynarski Death Plummet* – Matthew Rankin, Canada
- ◆ **TV Films**
- ◆ **Jury Award for a TV Series:** *Rita and Crocodile*, "Fishing" – Siri Melchior, Denmark, United Kingdom
- ◆ **Jury Award for a TV**

- Special:** *The Mitten* – Clémentine Robach, Belgium, France

Commissioned Films

- ◆ **Jury Award:** *NSPCC "Lucy and the Boy"* – Yves Geleyn, United Kingdom

Graduation Films

- ◆ **Jury Award:** *Edmond* – Nina Gantz, United Kingdom
- ◆ **Jury Distinction:** *Brume, cailloux et métaphysique* – Lisa Matuszak, France

Special Prizes

- ◆ **Festivals Connexion Award**

- **Région Rhône-Alpes with Lumières Numériques:** *In Deep Waters* – Sarah Van Den Boom, France, Canada
- ◆ **Jury Junior Award for a Graduation Film:** *Roadtrip* – Xaver Xylophon, Germany
- ◆ **Jury Junior Award for a Short Film:** *We Can't Live Without Cosmos* – Konstantin Bronzit, Russia
- ◆ **Fipresci Award:** *Teeth* – Daniel Gray, Tom Brown, United States, Hungary, United Kingdom
- ◆ **Fipresci Award – Special Distinction:** *Guida* – Rosana Urbes, Brazil
- ◆ **André Martin Award for a French Feature Film:** *Conversation animée avec Noam Chomsky* – Michel

- Gondry, France
- ◆ **André Martin Award for a French Short Film:** *Rhizome* – Boris Labbé, France
- ◆ **André Martin Award – Distinction for a French Short Film:** *Yul and the Snake* – Gabriel Harel, France
- ◆ **Gan Foundation Support for Distribution for a Work in Progress:** *My Life as a Zucchini* – Claude Barras, France, Switzerland
- ◆ **Best Original Music Award for a Short Film, sponsored by the SACEM:** *Dissonance* – Till Nowak, Germany; Music: Olaf Taranczewski, Frank Zerban
- ◆ **CANAL+ Creative Aid Award for a Short Film:** *Edmond* – Nina Gantz, United Kingdom

Autonomous Animator

By Martin Grebing



Fund Your Independent Project Now

Start your search with people who know you and your work – and work your way up from there.

Creating a short film, TV pilot or even a full-length feature film – all under your creative control – is undoubtedly at the top of many independent animators' or filmmakers' wish lists. Unfortunately, most independents never make it past the "wish" phase due to lack of funding or not knowing where to go to search for and find the elusive investor.

Once you have a fully developed proposal, business plan, offer, trailer and a host of other supporting documentation, here are some places you can go to begin your hunt for funding to make your project a reality:

◆ **Friends and family** – When looking for money, the first place to start is almost always with friends and family. Immediate or extended, your family knows you better than anyone and will often give preferential treatment and be less strict with stipulations regarding borrowing, investing or returning money. Even if you have stingy parents, when's the last time they ran your credit when you asked to borrow some money?

◆ **Chiropractors and dentists** – Cold-calling is rarely an enjoyable task, but if you put together an extremely enticing offer with glitz and glamour plastered all over your offering, reaching out to high-paid professionals that have a good amount of disposable income is as good a place to start as any.

◆ **Attorneys and accountants** – Attorneys and accountants like to make money and they understand the business of money as well as just about anyone. I was actually consulting with an attorney years ago on a completely un-

related subject and a simple, "So, what is this animation stuff you do?" question led to him investing five figures in a project I was developing. Attorneys have great confidence in their abilities to make sure your investment contract is sound (after all, that's what attorneys do), so their self-security works toward your benefit.

◆ **Colleagues** – No one knows your industry and its potential better than your colleagues. If they see you are serious about raising funds for an amazing project, chances are they will, at minimum, pitch in to help and give referrals, if not even provide some of the funding. There's a very high probability that any number of your colleagues have been itching to get their own

conversation will naturally head in that direction. You will have far more bargaining power if they come to you as opposed to you asking them to invest in your project outright. You could even play hard to get at this point, which tends to make people even more eager to be involved in your project.

◆ **Grants** – Thanks to the net, finding resources for grants ranging from a few dollars to thousands or more is a snap. Grants are wonderful because you don't have to pay them back. On the other hand, all grants are not for all people and you must qualify. This typically requires filling out quite a bit of paperwork and it may take months or longer to hear the results but as they say – nothing ventured, nothing gained.

◆ **Crowd Funding** – By now, everyone has heard of at least a few different crowd funding sites. This is the latest buzz on the interweb, and it seems a new one is popping up every month. While some people may roll their eyes when they see a link from a friend urging them to visit their crowd funding site,



projects off the ground, so they will more than likely be enthusiastic about joining forces.

◆ **Clients** – If you have a long list of people who repeatedly give you money to produce work for them, it wouldn't be much of a stretch to send them a short email, give a quick phone call or meet for lunch to tell them your exciting news: That you are working on producing your own project. Remember, at this point, it's just a discussion, and you are only sharing your excitement. This is not the time to ask for money or even let on that's something you would even consider. Let them lead you there; the

the bottom line is these sites have been the catalyst for funding many, many independent projects and is certainly worth considering if you are serious about raising money for your project.

To be continued ...

Martin Grebing is an award-winning animation director, producer, small-business consultant and trainer. He is president of Funnybone Animation and can be reached via www.funnyboneanimation.com.

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Working to Scale

The visual-effects crew on Marvel Studios' *Ant-Man* goes big for a small action hero in the classic comic-book character's feature-film debut. By Bill Desowitz.

Marvel ventures into new territory with *Ant-Man*, a lighter action-adventure take on the superhero genre directed by Peyton Reed (*Yes Man*) and starring comedian Paul Rudd as the eponymous hero: a petty criminal named Scott Lang, who acquires a special suit that shrinks in size but provides incredible strength.

There were two big challenges on the film, according to Jake Morrison (*The Avengers*), the Marvel Studios' visual-effects supervisor who oversaw work on the movie: How to do the incredible shrinking man with today's tech, and how to pull off the army of ants in an equally believable way.

"We've done as much as we possibly could to push the art form," says Morrison, who learned from such classics as *Darby O' Gill and the Little People*, *Fantastic Voyage*, *Inner Space* and *Honey I Shrunk the Kids*.

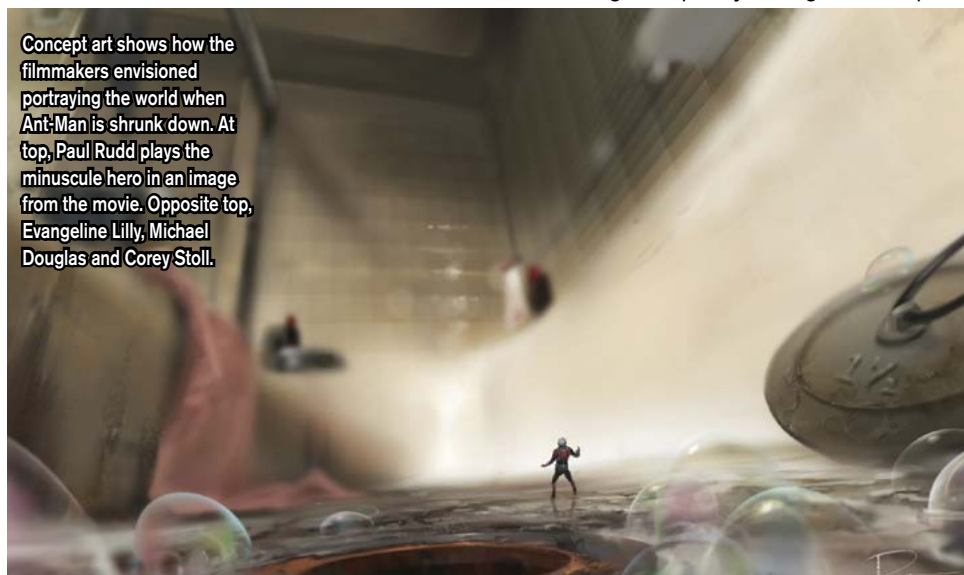
"Here, we have a man that shrinks and communicates with ants, which play a large character part in the movie," he says. "My brief was to deliver photorealistic environments, show the audience what the macro

world looks like, but give us the same freedom of camera to do dynamic moves and really bring the audience in with a modern cutting pattern without any of the limitations that you would've had before."

All of which jibes with the original comic-book character, who was created as Hank

Pym in the January 1962 issue of *Tales to Astonish*. The character took on the Ant-Man identity a few issues later and played a key role in the early days of the Marvel Universe – he was, for example, a founding member of The Avengers in 1963. But the character was never a big hit, quickly taking on new pow-

Concept art shows how the filmmakers envisioned portraying the world when Ant-Man is shrunk down. At top, Paul Rudd plays the minuscule hero in an image from the movie. Opposite top, Evangeline Lilly, Michael Douglas and Corey Stoll.





ers and identities such as Giant-Man before handing off the mantle of Ant-Man to various other incarnations in the decades since.

In the Suit

The Ant-Man suit is reminiscent of an old motorcycle suit with a diver's helmet on top. They built a real version of the suit, which Rudd wears throughout the movie, with a CG helmet.

For CG applications for the suit, every time there is walking, gesturing or a standing punch, they used motion-capture, building up a library with Rudd and his stunt-double.

For instance, when the suit gives him extra power, more acrobatic action beyond the realm of a normal person, they used animation. The edict was to animate the leap or somersault and then to seamlessly blend that with the mo-cap for the landing.

Meanwhile, they created three dedicated departments to handle the unique environments. "This is where we tried to reinvent the wheel," says Morrison. "We pushed hard for production to create what was called a macro-unit. This was a dedicated art department designed to make macro sets to shoot with a camera. If there was a moment, say, where you were in a normal-size set where the actors are sitting around and talking, and somewhere in that scene Ant-Man is going to run under a door or jump onto a table, we effectively had the art department create that

chunk of set that Ant-Man was going to interact with, physically building that 1:1 but much more highly-detailed. If he falls through a floor piece at one point and bounces off a pipe, the floor piece and the pipe are real and we salvaged as much as possible.

"We would line up multiple 6-by-8-foot table top sets pieces on a stage and our dedicated DOP would light these macro sets with lighting that was similar to the main sets but with added texture and contrast. We also brought in a motion-control camera for multiple moves, with and without SFX. We'd shoot the move that we needed for the macro shot, but the trouble with Ant-Man is that because he's only an inch tall, the physical size of the lens was still too large. So in effect we shot Ant-Man aeriels."

Focusing In

Then another team came in with three still cameras and motion control heads and got in closer creating a method of tiling with macro lenses and exposure brackets, tweaking the focus bit by bit as they went along. Then a third team came in with a high-res prop scanner and scanned every surface so you had all the grooves and pits and paint flakes. "Effectively, we harvested all this information so you had perfect motion-picture reference that was art-directed with a great camera move if you wanted to use the aeriels and you've got a kit to make it as physically-based and pho-

toreal as you need."

This all came together, for example, in the action sequence involving Thomas the Tank Engine (performed by Double Negative supervised by Alex Wuttke). "We wanted that to feel every bit as epic as watching Tony Scott's *Unstoppable*. We have sweeping camera moves as the train rushes toward us, but everything's on a macro scale, yet it's all physically based," Morrison says.

Then we have the ants.

"The concern early on was that people are creeped out by ants," Morrison says. Method Studios in Los Angeles (supervised by Greg Steele) worked on the ant animation, making them photoreal and definitely not creepy, each with identifiable characteristics and behavior.

The winged carpenter ants that carry Ant-Man, for example, function like Pegasus, so they were a special, anthropomorphic hybrid. Luma Pictures (supervised by Vince Cirelli) handled the swarming ants, orchestrating a slew of different shapes.

"Ant-Man looks very heroic riding his steed, like Harry Hamlin in the original *Clash of the Titans*," Morrison says. ☞

Bill Desowitz is owner of Immersed in Movies (www.billdesowitz.com), author of *James Bond Unmasked* (www.jamesbondunmasked.com) and a regular contributor to Thompson on Hollywood and Animation Scoop at Indiewire.

Tech Reviews

by Todd Sheridan Perry



Premiere Pro CC 2015

In the latest version of Premiere Pro, Adobe is focused on making the whole experience of creativity something that permeates the life of an artist. They have mobile apps in the form of Premiere Clip and Hue, which respectively allow for rudimentary video editing on your device and capturing color schemes from the world around you. You can now migrate your Clip edits directly into Premiere Pro for refining and finishing. And through Hue, you can bring in a color palette through the Lumetri color system and apply the palette to your edits. This dynamism and spontaneity is a key component of simply being creative that intrigues me about Adobe's direction with this.

But that doesn't mean they haven't thrown in technical tools to increase the ability of the editor to rough out things that would normally be sent to a compositor or colorist. Lumetri templates from SpeedGrade can be brought into Premiere Pro, and while you can't create your own templates from within PP, you can edit the ones that you import. Additionally, the templates can be shared for collaboration through your libraries in the cloud.

The new face tracker is also available in Premiere Pro, allowing for quickmasking or when you need to mosaic out the face of someone who refused to sign the release form. And for interviews, a bit of witchery called Morph Cut has been incorporated, which will smooth out those dreaded jumpcuts by using a brew of smart transitions and face tracking tech to blend together into a seamless cut. Speaking of seamless cuts, Adobe created Time Tuner, which allows retiming of clips without speeding up or slowing down. Instead, it analyzes areas of less activity and shaves off time in those areas (for when you need it shorter). Technically, this isn't part of Premiere Pro – it's in Media Encoder. But, for all intents and purposes if you have Premiere Pro, you have Media Encoder.

Overall, I like the path Adobe is taking with providing the ability to record inspiration and then have access to it from many places in many programs.

After Effects CC 2015

For After Effects, I feel the changes are less robust and far reaching than Premiere



Pro's. First thing's first: performance. I'm always banging my head against the wall with how gluttonous After Effects is with RAM – I have 96GB in my workstation and I can fill that up in no time. I know there are ways to manage that, but I would much rather have After Effects be smart enough to dynamically flush out what it no longer needs. Presumably, this is alleviated with the new uninterrupted preview. According to Adobe, there has been an overhaul under the hood to make performance better, so code has been optimized. This makes way for a more dynamic experience as you can have the preview continue to play as you make alterations to the comp. I suspect that while adding a hue/saturation to a bouncing circle is incredibly interactive, actual production comps with 16-bit 4K Red files may not be quite as responsive. (I haven't had a chance to throw AECC2015 into an actual production to try and break it.) Cynicism aside, I do feel that the goal is admirable and will just get better as hardware gets more and more robust. And, if it solves After Effect soaking up 94 GB in 15 minutes ... I'm down.

AE also has a new facial features tracker. An earlier version came out that was generally good at tracking faces, kind of a bare-bones planar tracker, but this new one kicks up the game by tracking moving facial features like eyes, brows, mouth, etc., provided points for each (if you are clever, these could be connected to other elements) or drive beauty work.

The Face Tracker also drives the much touted Character Animator, which provides a way to setup an animated character in Photoshop, bring it into After Effects, and then tie it to a webcam performance to drive and "automate" animation and lip-sync. This is something that I have a fundamental problem with. It's not the tech that bothers me. It's the conceit that animation is the mechanical function of things moving over time. It is not. Animation is an art form. Just because you now have a tool to record your performance and make stuff move doesn't make you an animator, and with ease of use comes a lack of respect for the original art form.

Lastly, AE is part of the whole creative Adobe world where you can access all of your inspiring shapes, color palettes, video clips and such that you have collected with your phone while out there

experiencing life. This integration, and not Character Animator, is what makes the new After Effects special and worth migrating to ... but only if you incorporate the Adobe Library into the way that you work.

Modo 901

I've been waiting for the 901 version of Modo for a while now, and now the wait is over with some fantastic new features to show for it. And "some" is an understatement.

My personal preference is to use Modo as a modelling tool. It's not a terribly myopic stance since Modo came out of the gates strong using its modelling tool to leverage its way into the industry. And the toolset has not been ignored: MeshFusion, which was once a separate plugin, is now built-in and fully featured, allowing for complex booleans between subdivision surfaces, dynamically controlling the parameters to dial in the look. Plus, mesh sculpting tools have been enhanced to deal with multiple levels of resolution and the Modo team has fine-tuned the application of vector displacement to play better with other 3D software. If you are a modeller, you should definitely be excited. And I haven't even touched on the UV tools and texture painting tools which now support vector-based artwork.

Modo utilizes a full physically-based renderer (and Chaos is building a V-Ray for it as well), along with new materials to support it. Many of these features migrate directly into the GPU-accelerated viewport for viewing the assets in a photoreal environment allowing for dynamic assessment of surfaces in different lighting situations and environments. And, there are new rigging features, animation, particles, dynamics. hair meshes ... you can pretty much do everything.

Modo is quickly growing into a self-sufficient all-in-one program that, given just a bit more maturity, could start to encroach into a niche currently held by more entrenched 3D programs. It's just going to need time to allow for wider acceptance into larger, legacy pipelines.



Todd Sheridan Perry is a visual-effects supervisor and digital artist who has worked on *The Lord of the Rings: The Two Towers*, *Speed Racer*, *2012*, *Final Destination 5* and *Avengers: Age of Ultron*. You can reach



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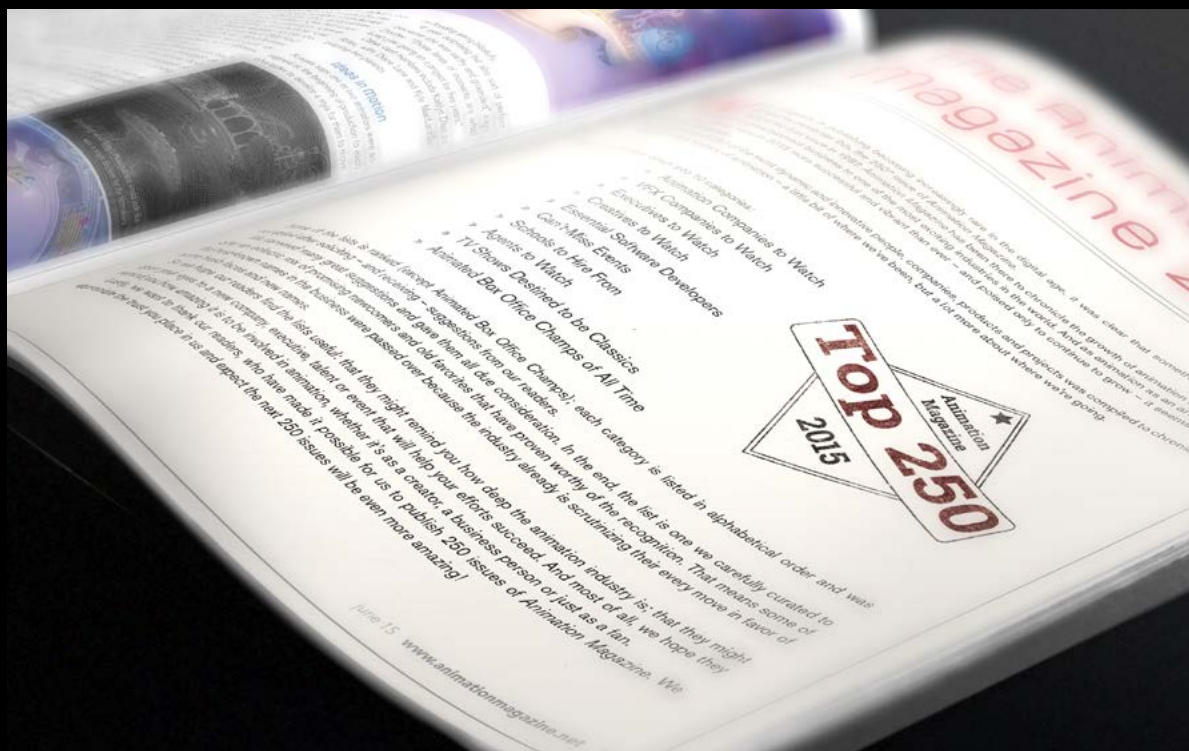
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Otaku on Tap: Anime Expo 2015



Unleash your inner weeaboo and bask in the Japanophilia on offer at Anime Expo, taking place July 2-5 at the Los Angeles Convention Center (anime-expo.org).

Premieres & Screenings

Tons of options at the AX theater this year run all day (and late into the night). U.S. debuts (*) and feature screenings include:

Thursday 6.2

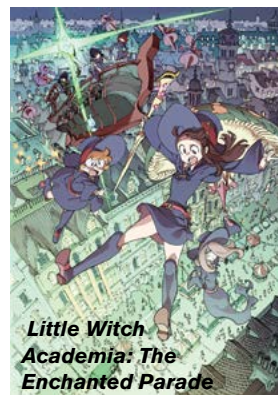
No Game No Life English dub* [4:45p] **Expelled from Paradise** English dub [5:45p] **The Last: Naruto the Movie** [6:45p]

Friday 6.3

Jojo's Bizarre Adventure dub* & panel [1:45p] **Little Witch Academia: The Enchanted Parade*** [5:45p] **Sailor Moon Crystal 1-2** dub* [6p] **ALDNOAH.ZERO** dub* [6p] **Tiger & Bunny: The Beginning** [7:30p] **Wolf Children** [9:30p] **Evangelion 1.11: You Are (Not) Alone** [11:45p]

Saturday 6.4

Cardfight!! Vanguard the Movie: Neon Messiah* [9:45a] **The Garden of Words** [3:45p] **Tiger & Bunny: The Rising** [7:15p] **Vintage Anime LaserDisc Night** [8p] **Summer Wars** [9:30p] **Evangelion 2.22: You Can (Not) Advance** [Sun. 12:15a]



Workshops & Panels

Thursday 6.2

Crunchyroll Presents: Summer Anime Preview 1 [12:45p] **The Complete Guide to Creating Comics/Manga** [1p] **VIZ Media** [1:15p] **Sentai Filmworks** [1:45p] **Aniplex of America** [4:15p] **Vertical Manga** [4:30p] **Critical Approaches to Japanese Comics & Animation** [5:15p] **Yoshiaki Kawajiri & Yoichi Mori Project** [6:15p] **Kyle's Adult Panel (18+)** [8:15p] **Digital Manga Inc.** [8:45p] **Hentai Remix with RABG (18+)** [9:30p]

Friday 6.3

Sailor Moon [10a] **Fate/stay night** [10:30a] **Gaia** [10:45a] **PONYCANYON USA** [11a] **Get Your Comic Published in Japan** [11:30a] **FUNimation Favorites** [11:45a] **Shonen Jump** [12p] **KILL la KILL** [12p] **30 Years of Robotech** [12:30p] **How Is Anime Made?** [1:15p] **Miss Monochrome** [1:45p] **Right Stuff & Nozomi Ent.** [2:30p] **FUNimation** [3:15p] **Thomas Romain** [3:45p] **Keynote: The Importance of Anime at Film School** [5p] **Titmouse Inc.** [7:30p] **FUNimation Peep Show (18+)** [8:30p]

Saturday 6.4

Production I.G [10a] **Shojo Beat** [10:15a] **SUNRISE & BANDAI NAMCO Pictures** [10:15a] **Crunchyroll** [11a] **Yuki Yuna Is a Hero** [11:30a] **How to Draw Manga & Portfolio Review** [12:30p] **Little Witch Academia** [12:45p] **Julietta Suzuki** [2p] **New Directions in the Japanese Animation Industry** [2:30p] **Crunchyroll Summer Anime Preview 2** [2:45p] **Kodansha Comics** [2:45p] **VIZ Animation feat. Neon Alley** [4p] **Dragon Ball Z: Resurrection 'F'** [4p] **NISA Anime** [4:30p] **Manga & Anime Go to Hollywood** [5p] **A-1 Pictures** [5:15p] **Working in the Anime Industry** [7:30p]

Sunday 6.5

Yen Press [11:15a] **The Creative Process & Anime** [11:45a] **Crunchyroll Manga** [12:30p] **The Structure of the Japanese Animation Business** [1p]

Fun with FUNimation

FUNimation Entertainment will host the U.S. premiere of **Dragon Ball Z: Resurrection 'F'** on opening night at the Regal Cinemas L.A. Live 14 in downtown Los Angeles, next to the Convention Center. English dub stars Sean Schemmel and Christopher R. Sabat (Goku and Vegeta) will be in attendance.



Leggo My Eigo



San Francisco-based publisher **eigoMANGA** will celebrate the 10th anniversary of its *shoujo* anthology publication **Sakura Pakk** with exclusive comics, graphic novels and giveaways at its booth #77.

The comics house also will present the **How to Draw Manga & Portfolio Review** session, including tutorial workshop on the fundamentals of illustration and storytelling, and representatives will be on-hand to critique portfolios on Saturday.

Music to an Eva's Ears

In honor of the 20th anniversary of **Neon Genesis Evangelion**, AX welcomes singer/songwriter **Yoko Takahashi**, best known for performing the anime's opening theme song "A Cruel Angel's Thesis." Takahashi will give a live performance, and there will be a voiceover presentation by Bang Zoom Entertainment and more surprise special guests.



Viva la VIZ



The dominant force in North America's manga and anime industry, **VIZ Media** will once again have a strong presence at the show. In addition to offering fans the excuse for a major shopping spree on exclusive items (Replicas! Publications! T-shirts!). booth #811 will celebrate *Shojo Beat's* 10th anniversary with a cool prize wheel, a **Sailor Moon** Tiara Giveaway and Quest for the Time Key challenge, and free *Tokyo Ghoul* posters.

In addition to official panels (see our slimmed-down schedule), VIZ will host a *Sailor Moon* dub cast autograph session [Fri. 2-3:30p] and photo op [Fri. 3:45-4p], Julietta Suzuki autograph session [Fri. 4:30p, Sat. 11:10a], *Sailor Moon* cosplay gathering in the Marriott [Fri. 4:30p] and a variety of screenings of popular titles like *Sailor Moon*, *Bleach*, *Naruto Shippuden*, *Ranma 1/2* and more.

Restarting *InuYasha* — One Last Time

The *Final Act* brings Rumiko Takahashi's epic to a triumphant, fitting finale. By Charles Solomon.

InuYasha: The Final Act Complete Series (2015)

VIZ Media: \$54.97; Blu-ray, 4 discs

When Rumiko Takahashi's popular "feudal fairy tale" *InuYasha* concluded in 2004 after 167 broadcast episodes and four theatrical features, it simply stopped.

The manga was still running, so no one knew how the story would end (a problem animators later faced on the original *Fullmetal Alchemist* series). Takahashi's characters politely thanked the viewers for their loyalty and flew off.

Five years later, *The Final Act* — which is being re-issued on Blu-ray — brought the comedy-adventure epic to its conclusion, picking up where the TV series ended. The filmmakers assume the audience is familiar with the story, which grew increasingly complicated over the years.

Kagome Higurashi, a normal 15-year-old girl, fell down a dry well on the grounds of her family's shrine — and found herself in the feudal past, 50 years after her ancestress Kikyo imprisoned the half-human, half-demon InuYasha. As the reincarnation of Kikyo, Kagome possessed the Shikkon Jewel, a magical gem that greatly increases the power of demons. (InuYasha needed it to make himself all demon.)

When the Shikkon Jewel is shattered, Kagome and InuYasha must ally to recapture the fragments. If a demon or evil human were to obtain even a single shard, the consequences could be terrible. Over the course of the series, the arch-villain Naraku has obtained almost all the fragments, but his servants are growing unruly: They're escaping his control and even trying to destroy him.

At the same time, Kagome's friends are growing more powerful. InuYasha increases the power of his sword Tetsueiga — forged from a fang of his father, the Great Dog-Demon. The fighting maiden Sango discovers the true na-

ture of her boomerang-like Hiraikotsu; Shippo the Fox-Demon has become a more independent, realized character; the lecherous Miroku finds the limit of the Wind Tunnel hidden in his hand. Even InuYasha's aloof half-brother Sesshoumaru joins the struggle against Naraku. But the most significant weapon may be the spark of light the dying Kikyo managed to preserve within the defiled Shikkon Jewel: Could that tiny glimmer prove to be Naraku's undoing?

and Naraku's illusions grow more baroque.

Kagome fettered InuYasha with the help of her priestess-ancestor Kaede: If she tells him, "Sit, boy!" he has to sit. Kagome is quite capable of standing up to this powerful, difficult companion. At times, the fractious attraction between Kagome and InuYasha feels like a replay of Ranma and Akane in Takahashi's gender-bending hit *Ranma ½*. But Kagome is a more interesting and complex character. In addition to the doubts and difficulties that beset any romantic comedy, she wonders whether InuYasha truly cares for her or feels a stronger bond to Kikyo, his first love. She also questions whether she belongs in modern Japan or the Warring States period.

Cast Changes

Richard Ian Cox repeats his role from the broadcast series as the hot-tempered but ultimately lovable InuYasha. Other members of the cast members are new, including Kira Tozer as Kagome. (Arguments continue online over the strengths and weaknesses of the new actors versus the original cast.)

After so many battles, lovers' quarrels, adventures, comic misunderstandings and journeys through time and space, it's difficult to say good-bye to Takahashi's intriguing, endearing characters. But the conclusion feels appropriate and satisfying, both for the characters and for the audience. Like Dorothy Gale, Kagome discovers there's no place like home. But there are homes people are born into and homes people discover: Kagome has to choose between them, and she chooses correctly. ☸



InuYasha faces his final test in the Blu-ray reissue of series finale *The Final Act*.



Facing The Final Tests

As the tale builds to the climactic battle, each character is tested and must prove worthy of the trust and love the others have bestowed. Kagome and InuYasha face the most-dire perils, and their triumph reflects the strength of the bond they share. Director Yasunao Aoki uses all the special effects at his disposal as InuYasha and Sesshoumaru develop ever more fantastic sword techniques, Kagome's magical arrows assume greater power,

Discs to Beat the Heat

Chill out with a CG *SpongeBob*, the Ghibli gang, the *Last Unicorn* or *Tom and Jerry* on DVD and Blu-ray this month. By Mercedes Milligan.

SpongeBob SquarePants: Sponge Out of Water

[Paramount, \$29.99]

SpongeBob series veteran Paul Tibbitt brought a fresh, rollicking big screen adventure to the Bikini Bottom canon with this mashup of animation and live-action that brought SpongeBob, Patrick, Sandy, Squidward, Mr. Krabs and even the nefarious Plankton to the surface world to foil a diabolical pirate who has stolen the secrets of the Krabby Patty formula. Tom Kenny, Bill

Fagerbakke, Rodger Bumpass, Mr. Lawrence, Clancy Brown and Carolyn Lawrence reprise their roles from the TV show, and Antonio Banderas plays the scheming swashbuckler, Burger Beard.

The Blu-ray 3D combo set (\$52.99) comes with plenty o' buried treasures. In addition to a raft of deleted/extended/alternate/test scenes, home audiences can take in behind-the-scenes featurettes "SpongeBob SquarePants: Out of His World," "When I Grow Up I Want to Make Funny

Sounds" and "Making the Burger Mobile Chase Sequence," plus the goofier "It's Hip to Be SquarePants" and black-and-white "A Day in the Life of a Sponge," *en français*. Educational tidbits include "Plankton Rules the World!" and "Bikini Bottom Confidential: Rock Stars of the Sea" with oceanographer Sylvia Earle. There's also a nice selection of musical flotsam and jetsam, including a short musical, sing-alongs and music video for "Squeeze Me" by N.E.R.D. [Release date: June 2]



Spirited Away & The Cat Returns

[BD, Disney, \$36.99 each]

Two Studio Ghibli classics get a worthwhile hi-def treatment this month, with Disney releasing two-disc English dub Blu-ray sets of Hayao Miyazaki's *Spirited Away* (2001) and Hiroyuki Morita's *The Cat Returns* (2002). Both films were major box-office and critical successes over a decade ago, with *Spirited Away* notably taking the 2003 Best Animated Feature Oscar. *Spirited Away* is a somewhat sur-

real fantasy in which young Chihiro must work at a spirit-world bathhouse in an effort to rescue her parents from a magical curse. The English cast features the voices of Daveigh Chase, Susan Egan, David Ogden Stiers and John Ratzenberger. BD special features include original Japanese storyboards, "The Art of *Spirited Away*" with voice star Jason Marsden, "Behind the Microphone" with the voice cast, Nippon TV's behind-the-scenes special and an intro by Disney-Pixar's John Lasseter.

The Cat Returns is an engrossing fairy-

tale about identity and fate, which follows ditzzy high schooler Haru who has the strange ability to talk to cats. When she rescues the Prince of the Cat Kingdom and mistakenly becomes engaged to be his bride, she must seek out help in the strange realm and discover her true self. Bonuses include Japanese boards, "The Making of *The Cat Returns*" and "Behind the Microphone" with dub stars Anne Hathaway, Cary Elwes, Peter Boyle, Elliott Gould, Andy Richter and Tim Curry. [Release date: June 16]



The Last Unicorn: The Enchanted Edition

[BD, Shout! Kids, \$19.93]

Despite having a Blu-ray release from Lionsgate several years ago, Shout!'s presentation of the new 2K scan (as seen at celebratory screenings around the world) offers a slight step-up if you haven't added this 2D classic from Arthur Rankin Jr. and Jules Bass

to your library.

Based on the work of Peter S. Beagle, the film follows a Unicorn (voiced by Mia Farrow) who, fearing she may be the last of her kind, goes in search of others like her. Her quest is complicated by the evil King Haggard (Christopher Lee) and a spell which turns her into the human Lady Amalthea – causing her to fall in love with Prince Lir (Jeff Bridges) and lose

sight of her mission.

This edition comes with new audio commentary with author Beagle, associate producer Michael Chase Walker, Connor Cochrane, Terri Kempton and Travis Ashmore; retrospective "True Magic: The Story of *The Last Unicorn*," highlights from the screening tour, animated storyboards and the original trailer. [Release date: June 9]



Tom and Jerry: The Gene Deitch Collection

[Warner, \$26.99]

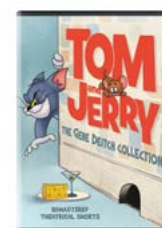
Calling classic toon fans: Get your paws on this faithfully remastered, new-to-DVD collection of *Tom and Jerry* hijinks from animation pioneer Gene Deitch. From the ancient ruins of *It's Greek to Me-ow* to

the briny depths of *Dicky Moe* to the wacky weightlessness of *Mouse into Space*, the original cat and mouse duo are up to all kinds of inventive slapstick shenanigans on this disc set.

In addition to those mentioned above, the collection includes *Switchin' Kitten*, *Down and Outing*, *High Steaks*, *Landing*

Stripling, *Calypso Cat*, *The Tom and Jerry Cartoon Kit*, *Tail in the Trap*, *Sorry Safari*, *Buddies Thicker Than Water* and *Carmen Get It*.

Plus, you get DVD special features "Tom and Jerry ... and Gene" and "Much Ado About Tom and Jerry." [Release date: June 2]



Honorable Mentions:

Beetle Bailey and Friends: 65th Anniversary Collector's Edition

June 2 [Hearst Ent., \$39.98]

My Little Pony Friendship Is Magic: Cutie Mark Quests

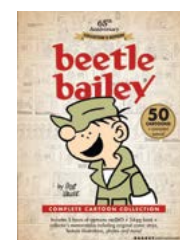
June 30 [Shout! Factory, \$14.98]

Thunderbirds: The Complete Series

June 9 [Shout! Factory, \$49.97 DVD | \$69.97 BD]

Turbo FAST: Season 1

June 2 [DreamWorks, \$19.98]



Summer's End

Creators Dan Povenmire and Jeff 'Swampy' Marsh bid an emotional farewell to their long-running Disney series *Phineas and Ferb*. By Tom McLean.

Summer is finally over for *Phineas and Ferb*.

The eponymous stars of the hit Disney XD show had their final bow in a special extra-length series finale special titled *Phineas and Ferb: Last Day of Summer* that aired June 12 and was preceded by a 73-hour marathon of all 222 episodes in the series.

The finale marks the end of a long journey for the show's creators, Dan Povenmire and Jeff "Swampy" Marsh, both of whom were clearly feeling very strong emotions as they discussed the end of the series.

Q: What is your one favorite episode?

Dan Povenmire: We have a list of favorites. If I really have to be pressed for a favorite, it might be "Rollercoaster" (the pilot), because it's just the one that Swampy and I did just by ourselves, basically. But now, when I watch it later, it's "Summer Belongs to You!" which is our first hour-long special and it had Phineas and Isabella in Paris. The last 11 minutes of "Summer Belongs to You!" is my favorite.

Jeff "Swampy" Marsh: I don't have a favorite, but you would be shocked at how many letters we get of people telling us, you got us through a really dark time.

Povenmire: We've known the show has been over for a while. We've sort of been over it, and a couple weeks ago when they announced it ... I tweeted it and immediately there were hundreds of people saying wonderful things about the show. And some of them were things like: This is the show that got me through PTSD; this is the show that got me through chemo with my kid because it was the one thing that would make him smile. There were all these kind of things. And I started crying, like I'm doing right now ...

Marsh: And I'm sitting there reading tweets and he calls me and says, have you been read-



Dan Povenmire and Jeff 'Swampy' Marsh

ing Twitter? And I'm like (sobs), 'Yeah!'

Q: Tell us about your new Disney show, *Mickey Mouse's Law*?

Povenmire: I feel like this is a good follow-up to *Phineas* because it's a completely different show but it has the same sort of positivity that *Phineas* does. Mikey is a kid who is the great- great- great- great-grandchild of Murphy from *Murphy's Law* – whatever can go wrong, will go wrong. So whatever can go wrong does go wrong around him constantly, since he was a little kid. But just as if you were born with one arm, you learn to do every-



thing with one hand and you don't think of it as an imposition. By the time you're in middle school, you're not upset that you don't have the other arm.

Marsh: If you ask Mikey, he'll say he's lucky because his life is filled with adventure and ex-

citement every day.

Q: What about this show has surprised you looking back at the original intent?

Povenmire: We were surprised how well it took off, how quickly. ... But there's a lot of things that happen over the course of a show. Major Monogram, Swampy's character, was not supposed to be anything other than a means of exposition. A means of getting Perry's –

Marsh: A means of getting the audience up to speed on what was going on that day with Perry, because he doesn't talk.

Povenmire: And he became this character and somebody wrote in ...

Marsh: ... he has a life and he goes home early on Tuesdays ...

Povenmire: ... and he's got this assistant, Carl, who works the buttons on everything. And someone had him talking off screen to Carl when something didn't go right and then in the next episode somebody drew Carl in and there's this sort of weird father-son thing with Carl, where he never appreciates Carl for all the stuff he does. There's a lot of stuff like that.

Q: What final thought do you hope people get from the show?

Marsh: The thing that I want people that are making programs to get out of this is you can never go wrong with overestimating the intelligence of kids. That you can make cool shows that appeal to adults, teenagers, little kids, all the way on down, without being mean, without the show being filled with jerks and idiots, and that you can put big words in and it's OK. And you can do classical

music and jazz music and folk music and rock 'n' roll and rap and all of that, and kids will get it. And if you can just stop people from dumbing down the subject matter that they feel they need to put in front of kids this whole thing will be a bigger success. ☺

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